

The BUFFALO BILL

STORIES

Devoted To

Far West Life



BUFFALO BILL AND THE KE-WEEK TOTEM

OR PAWNEE BILL'S BLACKSNAKE MAGIC

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"



Pawnee Bill, thrusting his body through the window, was just in time with his blacksnake whip to balk the half-breed. Buffalo Bill still sat staring at the totem.

THE BUFFALO BILL



A WEEKLY PUBLICATION **STORIES** DEVOTED TO BORDER LIFE

Issued Weekly. By subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y. Copyright, 1910, by STREET & SMITH.

No. 491.

NEW YORK, October 8, 1910.

Price Five Cents.

Buffalo Bill and the Ke-week Totem;

OR,

PAWNEE BILL'S BLACKSNAKE MAGIC.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE HOCUS-POCUS.

"How!"

"How yourself!"

Villum von Schnitzenhauser, Buffalo Bill's Dutch pard, was carrying a message for the king of scouts. He had six miles to go and had been told to see how quickly he could cover the distance.

A mounted man had hailed the baron with the usual Indian greeting. The baron simply returned the greeting and tried to spur on. To his surprise he found the way blocked by a horse and rider right-angled across the road.

Toofer, the baron's mule—always ready to take a rest when the baron was in a hurry—immediately sat down and wagged his ears contentedly. The baron, in quite a state of mind, looked between the mule's ears at the horse and rider forming the blockade.

The man looked like a half-blood. He was bare-headed, his hair was long, and there was a black braid hanging down in front of each ear. The upper part of his body was covered with a flannel shirt, and his lower extremities were clad in buckskin leggings and moccasins. Around his waist was a belt supporting a knife sheath, but nothing else in the way of weapons.

"Vat der plazes iss der madder mit you?" demanded the baron.

"Me want um palaver," was the answer.

"I don'd got some time to make any palaverings," snapped the baron. "I go mit a ledder from Puffalo Pill to Ropinson der marshal, und I vas in a pigger rush as I can tell. Ged outd oof der vay."

The half-breed's eyes were crafty; and there was that in the baron's words which caused the crafty eyes to light up ominously.

"Mebbeso you got um tobac'?" the half-breed inquired, making no move to clear the way.

"Ach," snorted the baron, "you make me so madt I can't see shtraight!"

With that, he tried to ride around the half-breed. The latter, urging his cayuse forward, managed to keep the animal crosswise of the baron's path.

"Me want um palaver, want um tobac'," insisted the fellow.

The baron, his patience gone, jerked a revolver from his belt and leveled it between the mule's ears.

"I fool enough mit you!" he snapped. "Ged outd oof der vay oder I vill put you outd oof der vay. I peen some fire eaters ven my madt iss oop. For vy don'd you go by Kingfisher und puy topac' oof you vant it so pad?"

A grim smile flickered across the half-breed's face as he looked into the muzzle of the baron's revolver. Slowly his right hand lifted to the breast of his shirt.

"None oof dot, py shinks!" roared the baron. "Oof you got a gun dere, you pull dot gun und den dere iss firevorks, only I made der firevorks fairst. Shtop vile you vas ap!"

"No got um gun," was the calm answer. "Make um watch while me show um Dutch chief fine totem."

The baron pricked up his ears at that word "totem." He was tremendously interested in charms, fetiches, and totems. Anything in the luck-producing, or trouble-making line had a big appeal to him.

With hawklike vigilance he watched the half-breed while the right hand drew the totem from the breast of the shirt. The totem was wrapped in a soiled white cloth. This cloth removed, the half-breed stretched out the totem toward the baron, balanced on the palm of his right hand.

The baron gave a gasp. Certainly it was the strangest totem he had ever seen.

It was an image, carved from red pipestone, and measured about six inches in height. It represented an Indian warrior, squatted tailor fashion, with arms folded; but, instead of a human head, the image had the head of a bull buffalo. The beady eyes of the buffalo exerted a weird influence over the baron, and sent a delightful tingling sensation along his nerves.

"Him Ke-week, Injun god," explained the half-breed, watching the baron's face narrowly.

"Vat iss it goot for, hey?" the baron inquired.

"Ke-week big medicine. Make um hocus-pocus. You like um totems make um hocus-pocus?"

"I haf some guriosity for sooch t'ings, yah, I bed you," breathed the baron, his fascinated eyes clinging to the weird image as though glued there.

"Mebbeso you buy um Ke-week from breed, huh?"

With a fierce effort the baron tore his glance away from the uncanny object.

"I like dot Ke-week t'ing fine!" he exclaimed, passing a hand across his eyes. He was a little dazed, and wholly unable to account for the odd bewilderment of his senses. "Vere you get dot?" he asked.

"I git um from Pawnee Injun. Ke-week him big medicine totem for Pawnees. Me half Pawnee, half Mexican. You buy um, huh?"

"How mooch I gif you for dot?" went on the baron, thrusting his revolver back into his belt.

He noticed that the half-breed was careful to keep the beady eyes of Ke-week aimed away from him.

"How much you give?" returned the breed.

The baron pulled a bag of smoking tobacco from his pocket.

"Dot's all der topacco I got mit me," said he.

"Buenos! I take the tobac', Dutch chief take um totem."

The baron was delighted. He had thought that he would have to give boot in the way of what money he possessed; and so great a hold had Ke-week taken on him that he would have bartered the clothes on his back, if necessary, in order to secure the image.

"Dere you vas!" he cried, and tossed the tobacco pouch to the half-breed and snatched the totem out of his hand. "Go 'vay mit yourseluf, now, und let me trafel vere I am going. I say to you a long time ago dot I vas in a hurry."

With a queer look on his bronzed face, the half-breed backed his cayuse to the side of the trail, and the baron set spurs to his mount.

He was in an exultant mood as he galloped onward. "Dis iss der greatest t'ing vat efer habbened mit me!" he chuckled. "Dere vas den cends vort' oof topacco in dot pag, und I ged me for dot dis fine Ke-week pitzness, vat makes der hocus-pocus!"

Resting his hands on his saddle horn he looked into the beady orbs of the totem.

"Vat funny tingling sensations I ged from der t'ing," he fluttered. "Schust to look at Ke-week in der eye makes me feel like I vas schvimming in der air, mit Fourt' oof July celebrations peginning all aroundt. Yah, I bed you, dere iss hocus-pocuses about Ke-week."

As before, the baron found it almost impossible to remove his eyes from the Pawnee idol. He did not attempt to withdraw his attention from the carved pipestone image, but continued to stare into the beady eyes, courting the delightful sensations the eyes inspired and wishing to see where the sensations would land him.

Toofer, urged on by neither word nor spur, slowed contentedly down into a walk; the walk dwindled into a snail's pace, and then ceased altogether. The baron, his starting eyes fixed on the eyes of Ke-week, forgot the importance of his mission, forgot where he was and what he was doing—in short, forgot anything and everything even remotely connected with his present situation. From forgetting things, his mind gradually dropped into a hiatus, full of oblivion slashed through with forked flashes as of lightning.

From his appearance, he might have been asleep in the saddle, except that he did not nod or become unsteady. His form was as erect as ever, and his two hands on the horn held the totem rigidly, the eyes of the buffalo head looking into his own.

How long the trance lasted the baron had no means of knowing. Gradually he emerged from the fiery spell and, for a space, fell to figuring out where he was and what had happened to him.

He realized presently that he was in his saddle and on Toofer's back. Toofer was at the trailside nibbling comfortably at the tops of some bushes.

"I vonder vy iss dis," mused the baron. "For vy am I here und not in Kingfisher by der hodel?"

Link by link he picked up the chain of events so mysteriously lost.

Buffalo Bill had sent him, that morning, with a letter to Robinson, the United States marshal. Also, the scout had requested the baron to see how quickly he could deliver the letter.

This being the case, why was the baron loitering on the way?

The Dutchman's mind was logy and needed the spur of his will to stir it into action; but his will had been stripped of its power and was only returning to its normal strength by slow degrees.

After a time his thoughts centred upon the mysterious half-breed and the Ke-week totem. The baron remembered that he had traded his pouch of tobacco for the totem. Riding along, with the totem in his hand, he came to the blank wall that had dammed his faculties.

Where was the totem now? It was not in the baron's hands. Thinking he must have dropped it during the hocus-pocus, he was about to turn Toofer around and go searching over the back trail. Before he could carry out this plan, he made the amazing discovery that his belt and guns were gone. After that, groping frantically through his clothes, he made further discoveries.

Not only were his guns missing, but also some nine dollars in silver which he had had in his pocket; and a silver match case, a dirk knife with a stag handle, his brier pipe and—the letter Buffalo Bill had given him to carry to Marshal Robinson!

Right then and there the baron almost went into another trance. He couldn't understand the hocus-pocus at all, but he did understand that, because of it, he had been robbed.

He dropped his eyes to the dust of the trail. There was a clutter of tracks all around him, and, among them, he saw the prints of a pair of moccasins!

The half-breed, by means of the Ke-week totem, had worked a spell of some sort; and, while the baron was in the spell, the half-breed had taken the totem, and also—what was of infinitely more importance—Buffalo Bill's letter to the marshal.

The baron's bewilderment gave way to a hollow groan, and he drooped limply over his saddle horn.

CHAPTER II.

HOCUS-POCUS NO. 2.

It chanced that, at about this time, old Nick Nomad, Buffalo Bill's trapper pard, loping in from the Cimarron to Kingfisher, stopped at Robinson's ranch.

Nomad had gone to the Cimarron to collect the sum of five hundred dollars for Pawnee Bill. He had been entirely successful and was returning with the money, all in gold, tied up in a canvas bag.

The Cheyenne and Arapahoe country had just been opened to settlement, and the prince of the bowie had been called unexpectedly to look after some business interests in the newly platted town of Watona. There was nothing urgent about the collection of the debt from the man on the Cimarron, but the old trapper was restive and wanted something to do, so Pawnee Bill had commissioned him to ride north and get the money.

Pawnee Bill left Kingfisher, riding east, at the same time old Nomad left the town, riding north. Little Cayuse, the scout's Piute pard, had departed for the Washita the day before to hold a potlatch with some Indian friends, so that only Buffalo Bill and the baron had been left in Kingfisher.

Robinson's wife and children, in the late forenoon, when Nomad halted at the ranch, were away from home, spending a few days with relatives in Reno. Robinson, however, happened to be at the house, and he insisted that the trapper get down, put out his horse, and stop a while.

"It's so darned lonesome here, since the wife and the kids went away," said Robinson, "that I hardly know what to do with myself. I've got to powwow with somebody, and you have happened along at just the right time."

The scout and his pards had become acquainted with Robinson during the exciting days that had preceded the "run" into the Reservation. He was a game officer, and had done much, in his time, to uphold the law in a country that had been particularly lawless.

Nomad cared for his horse and then, with his jingling bag of gold, joined Robinson in the shade of a cottonwood that grew in front of the ranch-house door. Two lazy-back canvas chairs stood at either side of a

small table. In convenient reach from the chairs was a box of cigars. Here was solid comfort, and the old trapper was soon availing himself of it. From a general discussion of the recent "run" the talk flowed into more specific channels.

"Buffalo Bill, Pawnee Bill, and the rest of you fellows," remarked the marshal, "have been mighty busy since you hit these parts. Tex Rankin and his sooners gave you a lot of trouble."

"Waugh!" grunted Nomad deprecatingly, "they give us plenty o' trouble, but nothin' more'n we could manage with one hand tied behind our backs. They was small-fry desperadoes, them Texas hombres."

"The killing of Lon Romney——"

"Thar was a lot erbout thet, pard, thet kept us guessin' fer a spell, but Pard Buffler's eighteen-carat head-piece wasn't long steerin' us on the right track. Fust off, we captered Tex Rankin an' sent him ter the fort. Then Rankin's three men, Red Jennings, Baxter, an' Lenaway, busted loose from the milingitary, down on the Washita, an' fer quite a spell we had doin's.* But all four o' the gang aire now in the hands o' the authorities. We've worked clean through our boomer trick an' aire ready ter shake the dust from our feet an' hike fer other parts."

"They took Tex Rankin to Fort Smith," said Robinson. "Heard about that, didn't you?"

"Never heerd a word erbout et. I reckon et don't make much diff'rence, noways. He wiped out Jack Hotchkiss, one o' yore brother marshals, an' he's bound ter git his gruel. When was he took ter Smith?"

"They started with him a couple of days ago. Strange you fellows didn't get word about it at Kingfisher."

"Waal, we didn't. Reckon they must hev kept et dark fer some reason."

Just at this point a half-breed rode up to the front of the house, dismounted, looped his bridle around the hitching pole and shuffled toward the two under the cottonwood.

"Wonder what that breed wants with me?" remarked Robinson, watching the approaching stranger with speculative eyes.

"You sell um half-breed grub, huh?" inquired the stranger, halting close to the marshal.

"Go on to town and get your grub," answered Robinson. "I haven't any more here than I can eat, anyway."

Nomad's bag of gold was lying on the table. He pulled it closer toward him. The bag jingled, and the half-breed's eyes alighted on it for just the fraction of a moment.

"Mebbeso you like to buy um totem?" queried the stranger.

Nomad began to display a little interest, at that.

"Totem?" he repeated, sitting up in his canvas chair. "Buffler an' me hev run onto a good many diff'rent kinds o' fool totems, an' I'm allers kinder cur'ous when I hear about 'em."

"They're fool things, all right, Nomad," declared the marshal, "and make a hit with superstitious redskins even if they don't with civilized whites."

Already the half-breed was removing the cloth-wrapped totem from the breast of his flannel shirt.

"Where are you from?" asked Robinson.

*These "doin's," to which the old trapper thus lightly refers, were chronicled in No. 480 of the BUFFALO BILL STORIES: "Buffalo Bill Calls a Halt; or, Pawnee Bill's Texas Tangle."

"All same Kiowa country," was the answer.

"Where did you get your totem?"

"Him Pawnee totem."

The cloth dropped away and the squatting warrior, with the buffalo head, was revealed. The half-breed set the image on the table in such a way that each of the white men could look at the beady eyes.

Old Nomad reached out his hand to take the image, but the hand dropped to the table edge. Staring intently, he leaned forward.

On the other side of the table, Robinson was likewise peering fixedly at the image.

"Him Ke-week, all same buffalo god," muttered the half-breed. "Watch um eyes. Bumby you see um make lightning. Him heap big medicine, you bet."

"Sufferin' catermounts!" muttered the old trapper, his jaw falling and his face relaxing as his eyes grew wider and wider. "Wouldn't thet infernal thing jest nacherly rattle yore spurs? Thar's somethin' erbout et thet I no cumtux."

"Take the fiendish thing away!" ground out Robinson, but without shifting his gaze or his position.

"Watch um eyes," repeated the half-breed. "Bumby you see um make lightning. Him big medicine."

The half-breed began to chant something in a low voice. It was a weird chant and threw a glamour of the occult over the two white men.

"I'll be dashed if I like this!" cried Robinson.

Whether he liked it or not, he continued to stare at the beady orbs of the buffalo head.

"I ain't used ter the kind o' feelin' thet's comin' over me," mumbled the old trapper, "but I reckon I never yit run away from er fool thing like er totem. Le's watch ther pizen thing an' see ef ther lightnin' ralely comes."

"Seems as though I could see sparks already," observed the marshal.

"We're civilized whites, pard, an' we ain't afeared o' these fool charms o' the Injuns."

"I'm not afraid of it, no; but still I don't like the sensation that's creeping over me. Of course, Nomad, it's only our imagination. It's utterly impossible that a senseless image should have any unusual effect on a sane mind, but—but—"

Old Nomad was breathing deeply but regularly. Robinson could hear the steady throb of the air as it came from his lungs. This startled him, for it was the breathing of a man unconscious in deep slumber.

"Nomad!" he murmured, but still without swerving his eyes.

There was no answer.

"Now," crooned the voice of the half-breed, "you see um lightning. Watch um Ke-week totem!"

The voice was compelling. A nameless dread shot through the marshal. He attempted to start up from his chair, but his body failed to answer his will. It was as though his limbs had suddenly been transformed into stone.

By a trick of his disordered fancy, the buffalo head grew prodigiously in size until it seemed to fill the whole space above the table. The eyes appeared to be as large as silver dollars, and from them, as from twin thunder-clouds, broke livid, zigzag flashes of light.

A laugh echoed in the marshal's ears—a long-drawn-out, sibilant, mocking laugh.

Robinson's failing mental powers realized that the half-breed was up to something, but the totem had ex-

ercised its uncanny influence to such an extent that resistance was out of the question.

Borne on a silent river of mystery, arched with the forked flashes of an electrical storm, the marshal glided into unconsciousness.

From this he was awakened by a startled, demoralized yell from the old trapper.

"I been hocused! Crawl'n' varmints! What hes happened ter me?"

As through a veil of fog Robinson saw the old trapper dimly, sitting straight in his chair and rubbing his forehead with his fingers.

"Thar's ther feller as done et!" bellowed old Nomad. "I'll git him, anyways!"

Another dim figure was standing close to the table. Robinson saw Nomad rise and lurch forward. The table was overturned with a crash and two figures lay struggling on the ground.

"Vat iss der madder mit you, Nomat?" clamored a voice. "I vas your bard! For vy you chump ad me like dot? Don'd I got drouples enough mitoudt hafing some more from you? Himmel-blitzen!"

Slowly, under Robinson's clearing gaze, the trapper disentangled himself from the other form on the ground and arose unsteadily to his knees.

"Am I asleep er dreamin'?" he demanded hoarsely. "How did thet thar infernal breed change inter ther baron? Mebbeso I'm locoed." He turned on his knees so that he faced the marshal. "Say, Robinson, am I locoed?" he demanded.

CHAPTER III.

STRANDED ON A REEF OF MYSTERY.

The marshal did not answer old Nomad at once. There was a water barrel, nearly full of rain water, standing at the corner of the house. Picking himself up, Robinson staggered toward the barrel and immersed his head in the water. This sent the blood rushing away from his disordered brain and aided in the quick recovery of his wits.

"Come here, Nomad!" he called, sopping the water from his dripping face with a cotton handkerchief.

The old trapper, mumbling incoherently to himself, staggered to his feet and reeled in the direction of the barrel. Robinson jerked off Nomad's hat, pushed his head over, ducked it under the water, and then held it there until the trapper was half-strangled.

"Er-waugh!" sputtered Nomad, shaking his shaggy head and sending the water flying all around him. "I reckon thet helps some. While I'm er-wipin' out my eyes, Robinson, look an' tell me if the feller over thar is my Dutch pard."

"He is," answered Robinson.

"Then how, in ther name o' the great hocus-pocus, did he change from er half-breed inter a Dutchman?"

"He didn't."

"I reckon he didn't. We're sensible whites, we aire, an' ain't ther b'leeve sich things. Ye looked at thet statoo same as me, didn't ye, Robinson?"

"Yes."

"An' did ye go bughouse same as me?"

"I did."

"Then how the blazes d'you know ther wasn't a razzle-dazzle hyar, the breed changin' himself inter—"

"That's foolish talk, Nomad. We must have been out of our wits for some little time. While we were like that the half-breed lit out and the baron came."

"Mebbeso," muttered Nomad. "I'm able ter reason, an' thet's what I'm er-tryin' ter do jest now, but I ain't bankin' on er thing thet I kin figger out, er thet anybody tells me. Waugh! Nothin' like thet ever happened ter me afore."

"It couldn't have been the buffalo-headed statue that played such havoc with our wits," argued Robinson.

"What was et, then?"

"It must have been something the breed did."

"Schust led me shpeak a leedle," put in the baron, walking toward the bewildered trapper and marshal at that moment.

"Whar did ye come from so suddent, baron?" queried Nomad.

"I come from Kingfisher," answered the baron gloomily, "mit a ledder from der sgout for Ropinson."

"Letter?" repeated the marshal, holding out his hand.

"Where is it?"

"I don'd got it," wailed the baron. "I hat it ven I left der town, aber I don'd got it now. Ach, vat a satness I feel aboutt dot ledder!"

"Did ye lose et, baron?" queried the trapper.

"Nein, I don'd lose him. It vas shtole from me py a haluf-preed feller."

"Snarlin' hyeners!" murmured Nomad, putting away his handkerchief and squeezing some of the water out of his hair. "I wonder ef thet was ther same breed as come ter us hyar, Robinson?" he added, turning to the marshal.

"This country is full of breeds," answered Robinson.

"Dis feller he hat der Ke-veek totem," went on the baron, "und he say vould I puy him for some topacco? Dot's vat I do, den I look at der totem in der face ondil py und py I don'd know nodding. And vile I vas like dot, der feller took my guns, und my knife, und my pipe, und my matches, yah, so; und along mit der resdt oof it he took der ledder vat Puffalo Pill sends to Ropinson. I feel vorse as I can tell aboutt dot."

"Blazes ter blazes an' all hands 'round!" growled the old trapper. "Et was ther same breed, Robinson!"

"I vake oop py der drail side," the baron went on, "mit Toofer eading from der pushes, und so gonfused mit meinseluf I vas a long time gedding pack to vat habbened. Den, pooty soon, I make some onderstandings. Dere iss moccasin prints in der drail, und I follow der prints. Dey come dis vay und shtop py Ropinson's hitching bole, der hoofprints oof der horse vich der man mit der moccasins rote. Aber der haluf-preed don'd vas here."

"I ged down from dot Toofer mu-el, und I go close to der taple under der gottonwood, und dere iss you, Nomat, und you, Ropinson, so keviet as some pumps on a log. I shpeak oudt, und you don'd shpeak pack; und den, py und py, olt Nomat t'inks I peen der haluf-preed und he kicks oop some ructions mit me. Vat a pad pitzness I don'd know!"

The baron heaved a groan and went back and dropped moodily down in one of the canvas chairs.

Robinson, who was a keen-witted and particularly level-headed man under all circumstances, had listened to the baron with intense astonishment.

His experience and Nomad's with the Ke-week totem he had tried to explain as the result of some chicanery

on the part of the half-breed, but the baron's recital placed the full responsibility on the totem itself.

"You say, baron," questioned Robinson, moving toward the table, "that you bought the totem from the half-breed?"

"Yah, so," answered the baron. "I gafe him vat topacco I hat for der t'ing."

"And then the half-breed went away?"

"I t'ought he dit. Anyvay, he vasn't aroundt vere I vas."

"You started for my ranch with the letter after leaving the half-breed?"

"Dot's der vay oof it. I hat der totem in my hands—like dot—and I look him in der eyes as I drafeled. Den, pooty kevick, I see lighdnings und I don'd know nodding ondil I come oudt oof it und findt meinseluf ropped."

The baron arose to set the table upright and pick up the box and scattered cigars. Helping himself to one of the weeds, he lighted it and got back into his chair again.

"Dot haluf-preed iss a dinhorn!" he declared. "He uses der totem to helup his roppings. Oof he vas here py me, I bed you I make him look pooty sick."

"What was in thet thar letter, baron?" inquired Nomad.

"Oof I know dot, Nomat, den I vould tell, und my drouple vouldn't be so pad. Aber I don'd know. Der sgout wrote der ledder in a hurry, und I vas to carry it in a hurry to Ropinson. Ach, du lieber! I peen so full oof pitterness on agount oof dot ledder I yish I could fightt."

"Et must shore hev been important," muttered Nomad. "Anythin' been happenin' in Kingfisher lately, baron?"

"Nodding dot I know. A feller come to see Puffalo Pill schust pefore he wrote dot ledder, but dey vent in a room py demselufs."

"Who was the man, baron?"

"I don't know dot."

"The easiest way out of this, I reckon," reflected the marshal, "is for me to saddle up and ride to Kingfisher. I'll see the scout there and he can tell me what he wants."

"I don't opine thet'll do any good, Robinson," said old Nomad.

"Why not?"

"Ef Buffler had wanted ter see ye in Kingfisher, he'd hev told ther baron ter ride out hyer an' tell ye ter come. Instid o' doin' thet he writ er paper talk, makin' ther message private—even keepin' et from ther baron. I'll gamble er blue stack thet ef ye go ter Kingfisher, Robinson, Buffler won't be thar; an' ef he is thar I'll bet another blue stack et'll be too all-fired late fer ye ter do what he wanted."

"What else is there for me to do but to go to Kingfisher?"

Once more the baron gave vent to a deep groan.

"Dis vas der vorst t'ing dat I efer hat habben py me," he mumbled. "Dot Ke-week pitzness iss pad pitzness."

"Whiskizos," said the old trapper heavily.

"What are whiskizos?" inquired Robinson.

"Waal, they're spooks what's allers layin' ter do humans er bad turn. They work through anythin' they takes er notion, er they don't work through nothin' at all. I allow, speakin' like one intelligent man ter another, thet whiskizos hev fixed ter use thet Ke-week

fer their hocus-pocusin', an' thet we all got the full heft o' their powers when we looked at the image."

"Nonsense!" said Robinson.

Nomad, in defense of his favorite weakness regarding whiskizos, began to bristle.

"Waugh! Bein' igner'nt ye kin tork thet'er way, but I hev had more experience with whiskizos than anybody, an'——"

He halted suddenly, gave the marshal a wild stare, and then leaped around the table. He looked over the ground in feverish haste—under the table and under the chairs; then he yelled angrily.

"What're you looking for, Nomad?" asked the marshal.

"Fer thet thar gold o' Pawnee's!" gurgled the trapper. "Thet half-breed coyote stole et. I mout hev knowed! Beats blazes I didn't think o' et before."

He made a rush for the hitching pole, executed a detour around Toofer, and began tracking the half-breed's horse in the dust.

"Ther whelp went east, Robinson!" he shouted. "We kin foller him, by thunder. Ef we hadn't waited around hyar, fool-like, we mout hev overhauled him, by now. Ef we kin ketch ther breed, we kin git back thet letter an' Pawnee's gold. Hustle fer yore hoss, amigo!"

Old Nomad rushed in the direction of the barn, followed closely by the marshal. Their individual opinions might split upon the rock of mystery as exemplified by the totem, but here was a thing that claimed their united efforts—the pursuit of the strange half-breed. They set about it with vigor.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WOUNDED KIWAS.

Little Cayuse was returning from below the Washita, where he had been to visit some of the Kiowas. When the scout and his pards had come up through the Kiowa country from the Texas Panhandle, Cayuse had visited in one of the Kiowa camps.

These Indians had lost their lands, just as the Cheyennes and Arapahoes had done. Unlike the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, however, they had yielded only with the expectation that their guardian deity, the great stone Taimé, would rise in his wrath and sweep the whites into oblivion. Taimé had failed.

Cayuse discovered, during his visit, that the Kiowas had pinned their faith to another deity, since their own had refused to help them. This was the Pawnee buffalo god Ke-week.

An old Pawnee, who lived two or three marches to the north, had an image of the buffalo god that had, according to report, been hurled from the skies during a thunderstorm. Handed down from warrior to son, this totem had at last come into the hands of the old warrior, who guarded it jealously.

Weird stories were afloat among the Kiowas concerning the powers of this god, Ke-week, and a runner had been sent to the Pawnees to ask if the god would be loaned to the Kiowa people. The runner had returned with the message that the totem would not be loaned, but that it could be bought for twenty ponies.

The ponies were gathered and the son of a Kiowa chief—Little Hatchet—fared away with the herd to

bring back the Ke-week totem. Little Hatchet was away on his mission while Cayuse was visiting among the Kiowas.

The little Piute pointed to the fact that the Ke-week totem had not helped the Pawnee materially during the time it had been in their possession; and he asked how, if it had not been able to help those to whom the Great Spirit had given it, it could possibly help the Kiowas, who were buying it for twenty ponies?

In anger because he had dared to doubt the powers of the Pawnee god, or its ability to help the Kiowas, Little Cayuse had been ordered by the Kiowa braves to leave the village.

So now, with his visit cut short in a manner that was far from pleasant, the Piute boy was riding toward Kingfisher. He camped for one night on the Washita, no more than a rifle shot from the dry wash where Hotchkiss, the marshal, had been slain by Tex Rankin.

A rabbit, which he ran down and killed, made his evening meal. Navi, his pinto, was hobbled where forage was good.

From among the cottonwoods where he laid himself down with his head on his riding blanket, the boy could look off over part of the country newly opened to the whites. Far in the distance he could see a point of light, shining starlike through the window of some settler's hastily erected shack. Somehow that light filled Little Cayuse with sadness for the Kiowas.

They were hoping that a totem, which the Pawnees were willing to sell for twenty ponies, would drive out the white settlers and give the land back to the Indians!

The Piute, although deeply imbued with the superstitions of his fathers, had been long enough with the scout and his pards to perceive easily the folly of such Kiowa reasoning.

So, with a heart sad for the Kiowas, he fell asleep under the cottonwoods, with the ripple of the near-by stream whispering in his ears.

He awoke several hours later, brought abruptly to a sitting posture by a cry in the night. The cry was not distant, but it was feeble and almost indistinct. Also, it was the cry of an Indian—he knew that—and, from the sound of it, an Indian in distress.

He answered. The cry was repeated. Bounding to his feet he hurried in the direction from which it came, calling from time to time so that the answers would keep him on the right course.

Presently he came to an open space among the trees and bushes, and there, dimly outlined by moon and stars, lay a dark form on the ground. He hurried to it and knelt.

"Who you?" he asked.

"Little Hatchet," came the gasping answer.

"Me Cayuse."

The boy had seen Little Hatchet on his first visit to the Kiowas.

"Ugh!" grunted Little Hatchet.

"You hurt?" queried Cayuse.

"White man shoot um Kiowa. Heap bad. White man take um cayuse, take um Ke-week totem. Ugh!"

Without inquiring further, Cayuse opened his medicine bag, struck a firestick in order to examine the extent of the wounded Kiowa's injury, and proceeded forthwith to salve the wound and to bandage it.

The hurt was in the shoulder, and loss of much blood had made the Kiowa weak.

The boy gave a grunt of satisfaction when the bandaging was done, and sat down beside the Kiowa.

"You sabe um white man?" he asked.

"Me sabe um heap coyote!" hissed Little Hatchet. "He steal um buffalo god, Pawnee totem. Me kill um, me find um."

The Kiowa knew a choice collection of English swear words, and he brought them all out.

"Kiowas heap mad," he finished, "no git um totem."

"Kiowas heap foolish," said Cayuse. "Pawnee totem no good."

"Pawnee totem big medicine," insisted Little Hatchet.

"Kiowas all same fools," proceeded Cayuse calmly. "Ke-week totem was big medicine, why him no keep Little Hatchet from white man's bullet?"

This was a poser. The Kiowa allowed it to pass in silence.

"Where you meet um white man?" went on the Piute.

"One march along Washita," was the reply.

"By big bend of Washita?"

"Wuh."

"You come so far, huh?"

"Wuh. Me come so far on the way to my people."

"When you meet um white man?"

Little Hatchet indicated that it had been just before sundown.

"How you call um Little Hatchet's cayuse?" the Piute inquired.

"Him claybank cayuse," answered the Kiowa. "Got um mark, so, on hind leg."

The Indian made a half-moon sign in the air.

For several minutes Little Cayuse sat thoughtfully, turning over the situation in his mind.

"You go back to Kiowas, huh?" he asked.

"No go back till me take um totem," replied Little Hatchet.

"Mebbeso you no find um."

"Mebbeso me no go back."

"Ugh!" grunted Cayuse. "Where you make um stay?"

"Make um stay anywhere."

"You sabe Scarred Face?"

"Wuh."

"Mebbeso you stay with Scarred Face?"

"Ai. Who hunt um totem?"

"Me hunt um."

"Buenos!"

"You wait. Me git um caballo."

Scarred Face was a Cheyenne living in the bend of the Washita. The redskin did not bear a very good name, but he had a son who had helped Cayuse, and for whom the little Piute had a high regard.

Returning south along the river, Cayuse found Navi, removed the hobbles, cinched on the riding blanket, and rode back to the wounded Kiowa.

Dismounting, he helped Little Hatchet to the pony's back, then started north with the pony in tow.

The lodge of Scarred Face was a squalid hut, surrounded on three sides by the high, wooded banks of the river. The hut was on cleared ground and had a deserted look as the Piute and the Kiowa approached it. As a matter of fact, it was presently developed that none of the Scarred Faces were at home—even the boy—Cayuse's friend—being absent.

Cayuse helped Little Hatchet into the hut and made him comfortable. The absence of the Scarred Faces was only temporary and there was plenty of food. In spite

of his wound, the Kiowa would be able to take care of himself after Cayuse had left.

Cayuse remained at the hut of Scarred Face until morning; then, after a hasty meal garnered from the stores of the hut's owner, the boy got ready Navi again and started on the last lap of his journey to Kingfisher.

Although he regarded with contempt the extravagant claims which the Pawnees and Kiowas made for the Ke-week totem, nevertheless he was eager to see what it looked like. He would do his best to recover the image, but before he went actively to work he would first talk with Pa-e-has-ka and secure his advice.

Noon came and found Little Cayuse halting for an hour under a tree on the bank of a creek. It must have been after one o'clock when he again began getting Navi ready for the trail. As he was about to mount, a man on a claybank cayuse came riding past, pointing south.

The claybank was tired, there was not the least doubt about that. His head drooped and his heaving sides were plastered with sweat and dust. The man on his back was a half-breed.

"How!" grunted the breed.

"How!" returned Cayuse.

Jumping to Navi's back he rode toward the other traveler. Any and every claybank horse, just then, was a fair object for the boy's investigations. He was expecting a white man to back the animal stolen from Little Hatchet, but nevertheless this particular claybank must be given at least a passing examination.

He rode close, watched furtively by the half-breed. Not seeing what he was looking for on that side of the claybank, Cayuse rode to the other side.

What he saw on the animal's right hip startled him. There, in plain evidence and as plainly the mark of an old scar, was a perfect half moon!

"Who you?" demanded the half-breed, an ominous glitter coming into his eyes and one hand lingering in the vicinity of a gun grip.

CHAPTER V.

HOCUS-POCUS NO. 3.

"Me Piute," said Little Cayuse. "Who you?"

His sharp eyes were on the half-breed's hand, his own hand warily copying the movements toward the gun handle.

Cayuse was using his wits. A white man had shot Little Hatchet and stolen Little Hatchet's horse. Here was the horse, without doubt; and that the half-breed was not innocent was proved by his sudden distrust of the Piute when he went around the claybank to look for the crescent scar.

"Me half-breed," grunted the man on the claybank.

"Where you ketch um caballo?" demanded Cayuse.

"Piute mind um own bizness," scowled the half-breed.

"Half-breed mind um bizness, Piute mind um bizness," said the boy calmly. "Half-breed no got um bizness with Kiowa claybank caballo."

The half-breed jerked the claybank around so that he faced Little Cayuse squarely.

"Piute all same papoose," he gibed, "all same fooi papoose."

No remark the half-breed could have made would

have stung the little Piute more. He had his eagle feather and was a warrior. Buffalo Bill, Pawnee Bill, and old Nomad all called him a warrior. In a twinkling the boy had plucked the revolver from his belt. But he did not make use of the weapon. It hung listlessly at his side while his eyes rested on the six-shooter which the half-breed was holding.

That gun of the half-breed's looked remarkably like one of the weapons belonging to the baron, Pa-e-has-ka's Dutch pard. Yet, how could that be? A white man had taken Little Hatchet's horse and the Pawnee totem. It was strange that this half-breed should now have the horse, and even more strange that he should also have the baron's revolver.

While Cayuse sat on his pinto and wondered, the half-breed took a cloth-wrapped object from the breast of his flannel shirt.

"Where you git um gun?" asked Cayuse.

"That is not your bizness," snapped the half-breed.

"White man shoot um Kiowa brave, steal um caballo," pursued the Piute; "now you got um caballo. Pa-e-has-ka's Dutch pard have um gun"—he nodded toward the revolver—"now you got um gun. Mebbeso you half-breed thief, huh?"

"Kiowa brave also got um Ke-week totem," returned the half-breed with an ill-omened grin. "Mebbeso Piute papoose like to see um totem?"

With a muttered exclamation Cayuse lifted his revolver, leveling it full at the half-breed's breast. The other did not raise the six-shooter he was holding, but allowed the cloth cover to fall from the object which he held toward Cayuse with his left hand.

The little Piute was looking at the totem.

"Watch um eyes, Piute!" said the half-breed; "see um lightning come from Ke-week's eyes!"

Cayuse stared into the beady orbs of the idol; and, while he stared, his revolver slowly dropped. How long he sat rigidly erect on Navi, staring first at the totem and then at the place where the totem had been, was purely a matter of guesswork. When he came to himself, there were three horsemen around him, and they were all talking excitedly and at the same time.

"Ugh!" muttered Cayuse, shaking his head and blinking his eyes. "Where half-breed, huh? You see um half-breed?"

"Ye run inter thet pizen ombray same as the rest o' us, hey?"

The little Piute shifted his eyes to the speaker.

"Nomad!" he exclaimed.

"Ther same, son," returned Nomad. "Did ther breed flash er statoo on ye an' work er hocus-pocus?"

"Me see um totem," said Cayuse, still bewildered. "No sabe what happen. Totem big medicine!"

"Dot's vat's der madder, Cayuse!" chirped the baron.

"Der totem iss shpook pitzness, you bed my life. Dot haluf-preed has a pipe vat belongs mit me, und my guns, py shinks, und my knife vat I carry aroundt in my bocket, und a ledder vich Puffalo Pill sendt py Ropinon. Ach, du lieber, vat a tough luck!"

"An' he's got five hundred in yaller boys belongin' ter Pawnee Bill," growled the old trapper, "which same I was er-totin' from ther Cimarron ter Kingfisher when I run inter one o' them Ke-week kiboshes at Robinson's. Wouldn't all this whiskizoo play jest nacherly knock ye slab-sided?"

"What happened to you, Cayuse?" queried Robinson.

By then Cayuse had so far recovered from his trance as to be able to give a lucid account of the way he had left the Kiowa village, of his meeting with Little Hatchet, and of his encounter with the half-breed.

"Waugh!" exclaimed the trapper, "we're all gittin' tripped up by thet thar Pawnee totem. Ain't et some scandalous ther way ther thing takes holt o' er ombray? I'm plumb 'Merican, an' et bowled me over, same's et did you, Robinson. Ther baron is Dutch, but the effect on him was jest as bad as et was on us; and now hyar's Cayuse, admittin' thet he didn't take no stock in ther totem but thet et shore got past his guard like et done with the rest o' us."

"I'm over my head with the thing," frowned the marshal. "In all my previous experience I never encountered anything like it. 'It's hard for me to credit the evidence of my senses.'"

"Et ain't er thing ter reason erbout. Ye jest got ter take results as ye find 'em an' let et go at thet."

"Der Kiowas say dot der totem vas drowed oudt oof der sky vile a t'undershtorm vas on," put in the baron, in awed tones. "Dot's vere der lightdning comes from vat ve see in der eyes oof der totem, I bed you."

"Bosh!" grunted Robinson.

"Don'd shpeak boshes aboutt dot," cautioned the baron. "It iss easy to say 'bosh' at a t'ing ven you don'd ondershtand it, aber it don'd vas goot bolicy und it don'd show goot sense."

"Why, baron," argued Robinson, "any sane man would know that the yarn the Kiowas told Cayuse is foolish! In fact, it's altogether too nonsensical to be considered."

"Meppeso," scored the baron, "aber ve got to gonsider a goot many t'ings aboutt der totem vat iss too nonsensigul to be gonsidered."

"Waal," struck in the trapper impatiently, "sittin' hyar palaverin' ain't goin' ter help me git back Pawnee's bag o' gold, ner it ain't goin' ter help ther baron git back Buffler's letter ter Robinson. We're on ther right track, so let's be hikin'. In two er three hours more we ort ter hev thet breed right whar we want him."

"Let's ride," said Robinson.

They started on forthwith, Little Cayuse now forming one of the pursuing party. The boy had promised Little Hatchet that he'd do what he could to help recover the totem, and now that he was on the trail of the buffalo god there was no use of his going on to Kingfisher for a talk with the king of scouts.

Nomad and Robinson, galloping stirrup to stirrup, set a swift pace for the baron and the little Piute. The hoofprints left by the half-breed's horse were easily to be seen in the dust of the road.

"Ther ornery whelp ain't tried none ter hide his trail," commented Nomad, as they rode.

"He seems to be easy in his mind over the outcome of this pursuit," answered Robinson, "and that's a fact."

"Mebbeso he ain't reckonin' thet thar's any pursuit."

"If he's got any sense he ought to understand that the baron and you wouldn't rest until you had tried to recover your property."

"Et's blame' puzzlin'," muttered the old trapper, "ther hul thing. Fer instance, Robinson, how'd this hyar half-breed git Little Hatchet's hoss an' ther totem from ther white thief as got 'em fust?"

"Let's make a guess," said Robinson. "The white thief may have been hypnotized by the totem, and, while

he was in a trance, the breed may have come along and annexed the horse and that Ke-week thing."

Nomad chuckled.

"Waugh! That would be workin' er come-back on ther white tinhorn, eh? But this hyar breed seems ter know all erbout ther totem. He don't git hocused by et, but he's able ter hocus everybody else."

"Putting together the baron's experience and Little Cayuse's, and then stacking them up alongside the experiences we had, Nomad, I judge that the reason the half-breed is immune is because he always shows the eyes of the totem to some one else and never looks at them himself."

"Kerect! But, ef ther breed should git ketched nappin' some time, er make a slip, I reckon he'd git laid out in er trance ther same as the rest o' us."

"Probably. He feels safe from pursuit and capture, I take it, because he believes he could flash the image on his enemies and get away from them."

"Snarlin' catermounts! I never thort o' thet! We got ter be keerful ef we bring things ter a show-down with ther breed. Et 'u'd be plumb ridic'lous ef we was ter come up with him, make er surround, then hev him turn ther Ke-week loose on us, an' us wake up an' find our guns an' hosses gone—an' ther breed gone, too! Waugh!"

They continued to travel at speed, coming finally to a place where the trail forked. The ground, in this particular spot, was covered with flinty rock that left no impression of the half-breed's passage.

"Which way now?" asked Robinson, as all drew their horses to a stop.

"I'm fer takin' ther left-hand fork," said Nomad. "Along thet fork lies ther big bend o' the Washita whar Buffler an' the rest o' us run inter doin's not so very long ergo. Ther trouble sign is writ large on ther big bend, an' as we're lookin' fer trouble I move thet we go theterway."

The rest agreed unanimously with the old trapper, and the party slashed onward along the left-hand fork. The rock-bottomed trail gave way to black soil, but the soil revealed no traces of the claybank's hoofs. The members of the party were tempted to think that they had taken the wrong branch of the trail, but Cayuse suggested that, before turning back, they proceed on to the hut of Scarred Face and talk a little with the wounded Kiowa. Perhaps, too, he suggested, Scarred Face might have returned, and there was a possibility that he knew something about the pilfering half-breed.

An hour later the party drew up in front of the Cheyenne's shanty. Nomad tumbled out of his saddle and pushed open the door. What he saw inside caused him to recoil with a gasp and turn a startled look in the direction of his companions.

CHAPTER VI.

A REUNION OF THE PARDS.

There were many things about that mysterious Ke-week totem which were hard to understand, and not the least of these was the manner in which the totem, aided and abetted by the half-breed, was bringing the scout's pards together.

First, the baron, trailing the half-breed in the hope of

overhauling him and recovering the scout's letter and some personal property, came upon Nomad. Nomad had just been "hocused" out of a bag of hard money belonging to Pawnee Bill. Then Nomad, Robinson, and the baron continued trailing the half-breed and came upon Little Cayuse, who had himself just come through an unpleasant experience with the half-breed and the totem. It remained only for Pawnee Bill to be caught in the queer net—an event which was already on the cards.

Pawnee Bill, finishing his business in Watona, turned south by west, crossed the Canadian, and attended to some other business at Cloud Chief, county seat of H County. Cloud Chief was not far from the headwaters of the Washita, and when he started back toward Kingfisher he laid a course across country which brought him to the Washita in the vicinity of the big bend.

There, in the timbered bottoms of the river, he put out his horse for a noonday rest, raided his ration bag, and then dropped into a siesta under some sheltering bushes.

His siesta was disturbed by voices. The voices came from the trail, not more than a dozen feet from the thicket in which he was lying. A little curious to see who the speakers were, he rolled over, parted the bushes in front of him, and peered out.

There were two riders in the trail. One of them was a half-breed on a claybank cayuse, and the other was a full-blood Cheyenne, with a zigzag mark disfiguring his copper-colored face.

"On-she-ma-da!" muttered the prince of the bowie. "Call me a greaser if that red's not Scarred Face, a muy malo Cheyenne. There's some deviltry afoot! That half-breed isn't what he ought to be or he'd never be holding a powwow with Scarred Face."

It was plain to Pawnee Bill that the two men had met at that particular place in the trail. Quite likely there had been an agreement between them. The half-breed was pointed southward, while the Cheyenne had joined him from the west.

"Why you go to cabin on Washita?" Scarred Face was asking.

"Ugh!" returned the half-breed, taking a letter from his pocket and shoving it in front of Scarred Face, "that's what the paper talk says. I go there to get even with an enemy."

"Me no sabe paper talk."

"You don't, but I do. You go 'long, Scarred Face?"

"How much you give?" haggled Scarred Face.

"How many bucks you bring?"

"Mebbeso I bring so many."

Scarred Face held up three fingers.

"Ugh! I give um the pickings—money, saddle, horse. We take um from white man I play even with."

"Me go," said Scarred Face.

"Where you got um bucks?"

"Me got um. Bymby we come to cabin on Washita."

"You'll have ter be pronto, Scarred Face. The game's ready an' waitin'. Me make um ride thar now."

"Scarred Face come with bucks plenty soon as you."

"Buenos!"

The man on the claybank put away his letter and spurred off to the southward. Scarred Face turned his horse and galloped north.

Pawnee Bill sat up for a few minutes and ruminated.

"Tell me about this!" he muttered. "That breed

is up to some underhand trick, and he's got Scarred Face and three more Cheyennes to help him. A white man is to be the quarry of that rascally outfit. I sure hate to think of a white getting the worst of it from such a gang. Scarred Face went north—probably to his cabin at the big bend.

"I'll chase after the old ne-be-nau-baig and take a half hitch on his part of the game. If I come down on the old whelp hard enough I can make him tell me more about the half-breed and his work."

The prince of the bowie crawled out of the bushes and pulled his riding gear after him. A few minutes later he had pulled his picket pin, wound the picket rope and fastened it to his saddle, and had mounted his big buckskin, Chick-Chick.

"Chick, old sport," said he, "here's a little game not down on the bills. But it's mildly diverting and came our way as a happenchance. The breed and the Cheyenne hadn't a notion that white ears and eyes were so close to them while they were palavering. Best foot foremost, Chick! That's the way!"

The buckskin gained the trail and launched into a swinging gallop. In half an hour he had brought his rider to the big bend and to the front of Scarred Face's hut.

Calls from the saddle failed to bring any response from the hut or from its surroundings.

"Am I shy a little on this end of the play?" muttered the prince of the bowie. "Is it possible that Scarred Face didn't come to his cabin after the three bucks, after all? If any of the Scarred Faces are at home, they're some backward about answering. I'll just go in and take a look for the red ki-yis."

Riding his horse around to the back of the hut, Pawnee Bill took a look at the high, timbered, semicircle of bank along the river. He saw nothing and no one. Dismounting, he left Chick-Chick at the back of the shanty and stepped into the squalid dwelling through a rear door.

The house was silent. Its one room lay all under the white man's eyes. The room was not empty, even though it was silent, for the form of a redskin lay sprawled upon a blanket in one corner.

Pawnee Bill stepped to the side of the prostrate Indian and stood looking down at him.

"Kiowa," muttered the prince of the bowie. "What is a Kiowa doing in the lodge of a Cheyenne? Wounded, too! I wonder if he's done for?"

Pawnee knelt down and laid a hand on the red man's breast.

"His ticker's active enough," mused the white man. "Look at his eyes, though! They're wide open. What's the red staring at? I say, Injun!"

The prince of the bowie took the redskin by the shoulders and shook him—not enough to do damage to his wound, but just enough to wake him in case he happened to be asleep with his eyes open.

The Indian did not respond. When Pawnee Bill took away his hands the redskin dropped back into his original position, his eyes staring up at the grimy rafters of the hut.

"Here's a go!" muttered the prince of the bowie. "If the red had cashed in there'd be some excuse for his lying like that; but he hasn't cashed in—he's as much alive as I am. What sort of a game is he trying to pull off?"

There was a tin pail half full of water on a bench at one side of the room. Pawnee Bill picked up the pail and threw the water into the Indian's face.

This had the desired effect. The Kiowa came out of his trance with a suddenness that was startling.

"Ugh!" he sputtered, sitting up on the blanket and turning his dripping face toward Pawnee Bill.

"Boshu nochee, redskin," said the white man. "What sort of a trance were you in, anyhow?"

"You see um half-breed?" demanded the Kiowa.

"I saw a half-breed, yes. He was riding a claybank mustang and——"

"You see um totem?"

"Totem? Deserted Jericho! Are you sure you're not locoed?"

"Him Ke-week totem, Pawnee totem."

"Now I get you." Thirty years among the Pawnees had familiarized Pawnee Bill with most of the customs and legends of the tribe. "Old Crooked Foot has a thing he calls a totem——"

"Me got um from Crooked Foot, pay um so many ponies for um." The Kiowa held up his hands twice.

"You were buncoed," said Pawnee Bill.

"Me take um, white man git um."

"Hold up, now, and let's get at this with some sort of system. You gave a herd of ponies to Crooked Foot for the Ke-week totem, and you were taking the thing to the Kiowas when a white man shot you and faded into the sky line with Ke-week."

"Wuh."

"Who are you?"

"Little Hatchet."

"Son of a chief, or I'm a greaser! How do you happen to be here, in a Cheyenne wickiup?"

"White thief take um claybank caballo——"

"A half-breed had the claybank I was talking about."

"Little Cayuse find um Little Hatchet, bring Little Hatchet here. Cayuse go find um Ke-week totem for Kiowas."

"Well, well!" muttered Pawnee Bill. "So Little Cayuse has tumbled into the Ke-week doings, has he?"

"While Cayuse leave um Little Hatchet in Cheyenne lodge," went on the Kiowa, "half-breed yell outside for Scarred Face. Him no here. Half-breed come into lodge, see Little Hatchet. Little Hatchet pull um knife, half-breed show um Ke-week totem, then Little Hatchet go to sleep."

"An-pe-tu-we! The totem put you to sleep and the half-breed went on about his ugly business. I'm not believing all of that, of course. Has Scarred Face, or any of his family, been here since you arrived?"

"No see um. Only half-bred come."

"I'm on the wrong track entirely, and——"

The front door opened at that moment, and to the intense astonishment of Pawnee Bill the old trapper showed himself in the opening. With a muttered exclamation, the prince of the bowie leaped to the door, and stood looking out at Nomad, the baron, Little Cayuse, and Robinson.

"Vell, py shinks!" cried the baron. "Haf you peen knocked out py der totem too, Pawnee Pill?"

"Pard Pawnee!" gasped the old trapper. "Did thet Ke-week thing git ye inter a trance ther same as the rest o' us?"

"Trance?" echoed the prince of the bowie.

"Yes, Pawnee Bill," spoke up Robinson, "we've all looked into the totem's eyes and lost our wits, so——"

"I reckon you have lost your wits!" exclaimed Pawnee Bill. "Wake up, some of you, and talk sense."

CHAPTER VII.

PARDS IN COUNCIL.

The baron, Cayuse, and Robinson dismounted. While Pawnee Bill leaned against the wall of the house and listened to their various experiences, with now and then an illuminating remark from old Nomad, the face of the bowie man was a study.

"Are you all done, compadres?" he asked, after the baron, who had tagged along behind the others with his recital, had gurgled into an awed silence.

"Thet's all we got ter say, Pawnee," answered the trapper. "Buffer's pards seem ter all of 'em hev met up with the Ke-week totem. We're holdin' our breath waitin' fer you ter tell us jest how you got hit."

"I didn't get hit, Nick," said Pawnee Bill.

"Ye didn't see the totem?"

"No."

"Then ye ain't got er idee what it kin do ter a man."

"You fellows have been trying to give me an idea, but the only result has been to make me pretty sure you've all gone off the jump. An image, six inches high, carved out of pipestone, hasn't the power to cast spells."

"If I hadn't gone through one of the spells, Lillie," said Robinson, "I'd sure take the same stand you're taking. But I've sampled the totem, and I want to tell you that the thing certainly does cast a spell upon any one who looks into its eyes."

The prince of the bowie threw back his head and laughed loudly.

"Et ain't no larfin' matter, Pawnee," protested the old trapper.

"Don'd laugh aboutt dot," begged the baron. "Ven you don'd know somet'ing for sure, den don'd make some laughs ofer it."

"Pards," averred Pawnee Bill, sobering, "you're all the victims of your own imagination."

"Ach, Himmell!" muttered the baron. "Vas it imachination dot put me to shleep on dot Toofer mu-el, rightd in der roadt, vile I vas hurrying like anyt'ing to-vards Ropinson's? Vas it imachination dot took my guns, und my bipe, und my knife, und my money, und der ledder vat der sgout gif me for Ropinson? Ach, vat a luck! Imachination! Vat a foolishness!"

"You hypnotized yourselves," declared Pawnee.

"You're laboring harder to explain that it was our fault, Pawnee Bil," spoke up Robinson, "than you would to believe the simple truth—and that is that it was entirely the fault of the totem. How such a senseless image had so mysterious an effect on us, I can't begin to understand. But it had the effect. There's no getting around that."

"I've known for a good many years that Crooked Foot had a thing which the Pawnees venerated very highly. Whenever a Pawnee got sick, or was otherwise down on his luck, Crooked Foot used to lug out his totem and conjure sickness and misfortune away from the afflicted warrior. The warrior had to pay him a

stiff price for it, too. That totem was a gold mine for Crooked Foot, and I'm surprised that he should sell it to a Kiowa for a herd of ponies. I guess, though, that Crooked Foot is getting old and wants to go out of the incantation business."

"Didn't you ever see this totem, Pawnee?" queried the marshal.

"Never, amigo. You see, I never cared a whole lot for fairy tales or wonder stories. Realities are hard enough for me to wrestle with. But we'll pass up that part of the affair for now and get down to something else that is of more importance. Buffalo Bill sent a letter to you, Robinson, at the hands of the baron. The baron left Kingfisher this morning, met with hard luck on the road, and the letter was taken away from him."

"Dot's der vay oof it," said the baron gloomily.

"An' don't fergit, Pawnee," stuck in old Nomad, "thet ther breed ain't only got Buffer's letter, but he's also got er bagful o' gold belongin' ter you."

"If I had known all this an hour or so ago," observed the prince of the bowie, "I might have been able to call the half-breed's little game. As for that, it may not be too late even now to put a crimp in these goings on."

"Now we're gittin' down ter cases," said Nomad, with considerable satisfaction. "What hev ye found out, Pawnee?"

The prince of the bowie told about the meeting he had witnessed on the trail to the south, and repeated what he had overheard pass between the half-breed and Scarred Face.

"Ugh!" muttered Cayuse. "Scarred Face got heap bad heart. Him help half-breed."

"That's it, son," went on the prince of the bowie. "When the two ki-yis parted the breed rode south and the Cheyenne came in this direction. I supposed he was coming to his wickiup after the three bucks he's to take to this cabin on the Washita to help the breed in his underhand work, so I saddled up and loped in this direction. When I got here, all I found was that wounded Kiowa."

"The breed had stopped in front and called for Scarred Face. The Cheyenne didn't show up, so the breed got off the claybank and went inside. He saw Little Hatchet, and when the Kiowa drew a knife the breed sprung the Ke-week totem on him. I helped Little Hatchet out of his trance with a bucket of water, and he told me what had happened to him."

"Now, compadres, here's the way I size this business up—putting two and two together and figuring on the proposition as well as I can: The breed is up to some deviltry, and Scarred Face is to help him. When he broke away from you fellows, he came straight here after Scarred Face. The Cheyenne wasn't at home. After throwing Little Hatchet into a trance, the breed went on and met the Cheyenne farther down the trail—as it chanced, close to the place where I was taking my nooning. That's clear enough, eh?"

"So fur as et goes, pard, I reckon yes," returned the old trapper. "But what's et all erbout? What good's thet letter ter ther breed? Thet must hev been ther same letter ye seen ther breed showin' ter Scarred Face."

"Keno, Nick! It was the same letter. Now, follow me. In that letter Buffalo Bill must have asked Robin-

son to meet him at this cabin on the Washita. What cabin do you suppose that was?"

"Why," said the marshal, "it must have been the cabin the scout was telling me about—the one where he and his pards made their headquarters just after they came up from the Texas Panhandle. He knew that I had the location of that cabin, and if he wanted to meet me anywhere in that vicinity the cabin would be just the place."

"Right! When he gave the baron the letter he told him to hurry. The scout had just been closeted with some one the baron didn't know. When that man went away, our pard wrote his letter and told the baron to hit only the high places between Kingfisher and Robinson's ranch. I'll gamble my spurs, compadres, that the scout rode south from Kingfisher pretty soon after the baron left to take the letter to the marshal."

"Now, we don't know why Pard Bill went south to the cabin on the Washita—but we can be sure that something of great importance called him. None of his pards were around—that is, none except the baron. I was in Watona, Cayuse was hobnobbing with the Kiowas, and Nomad was on the Cimarron. Our pard had to pick up some one to help him, and he sent for Robinson."

"Waugh!" muttered the old trapper, who had been listening intently, "ye make et as plain as ef ye'd drawed er diagram, Pawnee. Some excitement was turned on by ther feller thet had a private palaver with Buffler in Kingfisher. But what ther blazes could et hev ben fer call fer sich quick action? I was erbout due from ther Cimarron, an' et shore seems as though Buffler might hev waited."

"Evidently, Nick," proceeded Pawnee Bill, "there wasn't time to wait. Pard Bill is at that cabin, by now, and the breed is either there, or on his way, and that scoundrelly Scarred Face is to join the breed with three bad bucks. It looks dark for our pard unless we can do something."

"What has this half-breed got against the scout?" queried Robinson.

"That's a conundrum. Maybe the breed is a friend of Tex Rankin, or of Baxter, or Red Jennings, or Lenaway. It's possible. He may want to square up with the scout on account of those murderin' sooners."

"I kin understand some o' what's happened," growled the trapper, "but thar's a hull lot more thet's plenty dark. Et was er white thief as shot the Kiowa an' took his hoss an' the Ke-week totem. Whar'd the breed git 'em?"

"Pass the ante."

"All has gone wrong mit Puffalo Pill," wailed the baron, "schust pecause dot ledder got away from me! I don't know vat to do mit meinseluf, I vas so madt at dot haluf-preed feller."

"There's just one thing for us to do, amigos," asserted Pawnee Bill.

"Name et, Pawnee," said the trapper.

"We've got to make a quick run for the cabin on the Washita. If the scout's there, and in trouble with the breed, Scarred Face and some more Cheyennes, we'll get him out."

"Dot's vat ve vill, py shimineddy!" chirruped the baron, plucking up heart. "Ve can safe der sgout from drouple oof ve can't ged pack der ledder for Ropinson."

"I'll be a little late arriving at the cabin on the Wa-

shita," said the marshal grimly, "but perhaps it's a case of better late than never."

While Robinson and the pards were mounting, Cayuse stepped into the cabin for a hasty word with Little Hatchet. He came out, after a moment, leaped to the back of Navi and hastened after the others.

"Did ther Kiowa tell ye anythin' important, son?" asked old Nomad.

"Nah," said Cayuse. "Him heap mad. I tell him look out if Scarred Face come back."

"I'm hoping this tangle will clear up a little when we get to that cabin on the Washita," muttered Robinson. "I never had a thing get me so twisted up as this has done."

"That Ke-week totem has had a bad effect on all of you," laughed the prince of the bowie.

"I'm hoping, too," went on Robinson, "that we'll find out more about that totem."

"I'd like to try it once," said Pawnee Bill. "I'll bet a hundred it couldn't put me down and out."

"Meppy you don't know aboutt dot, Pawnee," spoke up the baron.

CHAPTER VIII.

BUFFALO BILL'S SUDDEN MOVE.

The unknown man, who had been closeted with the scout in the Kingfisher hotel, had brought startling news. He was a deputy marshal, and his right hand had been freshly bandaged and was hanging from his neck in a sling.

"Buffalo Bill," said the man, as soon as the two were by themselves, "my name's Yarnall, and I'm a deperty United States marshal. A mighty bad thing has happened, an' Bennett sent me ter you right off ter see what ye could do ter help us out."

"Who's Bennett?" asked the scout.

"He's the marshal I been helpin'."

"What's happened?"

"Well, last night Bennett an' me started ter take Tex Rankin from Reno ter Smith——"

"To take him to Fort Smith?" repeated the scout, surprised.

"Yes. A gang o' tough Texans aire gatherin', down below the big bend o' the Washita, an' the troopers from down there brought word that they was plannin' ter do somethin' fer Rankin."

"They couldn't do anything for Rankin while he was locked up in the guardhouse, could they?"

"I reckon not; still, it was thought best ter remove Rankin ter Fort Smith, an' the job was given ter Bennett an' me. We left the fort in the small hours, Rankin handcuffed an' tied ter a hoss an' riding between us. Somehow he slipped his cuffs—got his left hand out; then, afore I could guess what was up, he leaned over an' hit Bennett on the head with the swingin' empty cuff. Bennett drapped from his hoss like he'd been shot. 'Course I pulled a gun, but Tex Rankin was already off the led hoss an' jugglin' with Bennett's shooters."

"Afore I could pull trigger, Rankin put a bullet inter my arm. Bennett was dazed, but he recovered an' made a grab at Rankin's feet. Rankin turned loose a shot at him an' sent a slug inter his hip. While I was flounderin' around with this game arm, an' Bennett—who

couldn't walk—was limberin' up the other gun he had in his belt, Tex Rankin slid fer the timber. He hadn't time ter take a hoss—but was glad enough ter git away on foot, I reckon."

"Did you try to overhaul him?" asked the scout, deeply interested.

"Sure we did! With my one good arm I managed ter help Bennett onto his hoss, an' we bushwhacked through the timber till sunup, but couldn't find hide nor hair o' Rankin. By then Bennett was about all in with his wound. I had ter ride alongside his hoss an' hold him in the saddle. An' I had ter tow the led hoss, too. We come ter a ranch an' I got Bennett inter the house an' onto a bed.

"Go fer Buffler Bill, Yarnall," says Bennett ter me. "Don't let any grass grow under yore feet makin' fer Kingfisher. Tell Buffler Bill what's happened, an' ask him ter do what he kin ter recapture Rankin."

"Bennett further told me ter keep the escape quiet, so'st not ter let it reach them Texans, down on the Washita. The rancher himself kerried word ter the fort, leavin' the ranch fer thar the same time I left ter come here."

"This is hard luck!" exclaimed the scout. "I was just congratulating myself that Tex Rankin, and the other three members of his gang now awaiting trial, would get all that was coming to them and without any hitch."

"It's mighty tough," muttered Yarnall gloomily, "but I don't see what more me'n Bennett could 'a' done. Tex slipped his left hand out o' his cuffs—an' that's whar the trouble commenced. How he ever done it is more'n I kin savvy."

"Such things happen, now and again," said the scout. "It's hard luck, but not to be helped. The thing to do now is to recapture Rankin."

"That's the ticket."

"The quickest way to recapture him, it seems to me," remarked the scout, "would be to raise an alarm. Instead of keeping the matter quiet, let it be known everywhere, and just as soon as possible. In that way, Yarnall, there'll be a thousand people on the lookout for Rankin—and a thousand people can do a whole lot more than one man, you know."

"Here's the situation, Buffler Bill," proceeded Yarnall. "Bennett thinks, if no one tries ter head Rankin off, that he'll make fer the south ter jine them other Texans on the Washita; an' it was Bennett's opinion, further, that you might hustle in that direction with some o' yer pards an' nab him. He's on foot, an' you an' yer pards'll be on hossback, so yer chances ort ter be fair ter middlin', don't ye think?"

"Rankin won't be on foot long, Yarnall," said the scout. "He's notorious for the ease with which he can steal horses. He'll not be long in getting a mount."

"Well, he won't have much the start o' ye, even at that. Bennett opines that, seein' as how you an' your pards captered Rankin oncet, ye'll know him an' kin turn the trick ag'in a heap easier than some un who never set eyes on Rankin at all."

"There may be something in that."

"Question is, aire ye willin' ter take the job?"

"Only my Dutch pard is with me," said the scout; "the rest are all away from town. Robinson, though, lives only a few miles out. I can send for him."

"While ye're waitin' fer him ter come ter Kingfisher, Tex Rankin'll be puttin' in some good licks goin' south."

"I'll fix it so that Robinson will join me some place on the Washita. He's well acquainted with that part of the country, and he might serve me, in that respect, as well as Pawnee Bill."

"Bennett an' I hate ter go shoulderin' off the work onto you, Buffler Bill, but neither him nor me is in a fit condition ter do anythin'. The bullet's still in my arm, an' I got ter go from here ter a doctor's an' git it took out."

"The quicker you have it attended to, Yarnall," answered the scout, getting up, "the better."

"Ye'll take holt right off?"

"At once."

"Bully! As soon's I git fixed up I'll go right back ter that ranch an' tell Bennett. He'll be plumb tickled, kase he knows that you'll do more ter undo that bobble we made than anybody else."

"You say word has been sent to the fort?"

"Yes."

"That will make stir enough. There's no use spreading any more general alarm until I see what I can accomplish down on the Washita. Who are those Texans which the troopers report are showing up in the south?"

"Thar ain't nothin' certain about them Texans. Maybe they're thar an' maybe they ain't. The information about 'em is purty vague."

"If it's as vague as all that," said the scout, "then there's no reason to suppose that Rankin will go south to join them, and by going south myself I may be doing the wrong thing."

"Bennett understands that, an' so do I. Still, Buffler Bill, it's the only clue we got ter foller. Tex an' them other three sooners was overheard talkin' in the guardhouse about some men comin' up from the Panhandle. From this, whether thar's any Texans on the Washita or not, Rankin had a notion thar might be. An' that notion, more'n likely, 'll kerry him south."

"Possibly. Go to the doctor's now, Yarnall, and I'll get my Dutch pard on the road to Robinson's with a letter. Robinson, the baron, and I will make a pretty good handful for the gang of Texans, in case they are there and Rankin meets them before we overhaul him. We'll do our best, and see what comes of it."

Yarnall left the hotel and the scout seated himself at a writing table and scribbled a few lines to Robinson.

"FRIEND ROBINSON: Tex Rankin escaped while being taken from Reno to Smith. There are other Texans supposed to be on the Washita ready to help him, and it is surmised that Rankin went in that direction. All my pards, except the baron, are away from town. When you get this, kindly make a run for that cabin on the Washita where I and my pards had a hangout the time we first encountered Tex and his sooners. I'll proceed directly there from Kingfisher, and hope to be waiting for you when you arrive. We're keeping this quiet, so that the news will not reach the Texans. Tell the baron what's in this letter and bring him with you to the Washita.
Hastily
BUFFALO BILL."

Having directed the envelope and sealed it, the scout went to find the baron. He was in the office playing high five with a drummer.

"You know where Robinson, the marshal, lives, eh, baron?" the scout asked.

"Yah, so," was the answer.

"Well, take this letter out to him, and send Toofer over the line for a record. The matter's important."

"Iss dere some oxcidement on?"

"There may be."

"Und vere do I come in mit it?"

"You'll come in with Robinson. After he reads the letter he'll tell you what do to. Lively, now!"

The baron made a rush for the stable and got Toofer under saddle. The mule was going like a lightning express when the baron passed the front of the hotel, yelling his good-byes and waving his cap.

The scout was particularly anxious to recapture Rankin. The scoundrel had made Buffalo Bill and his pards a good deal of trouble, and they had finally run him to earth and proved, by means of a photograph, that he had killed Jack Hotchkiss, a United States marshal. About twenty-five officers, armed with photographic instruments, had been placed in the Reservation just prior to the opening.

These officers were to look for "sooners"—that is, for the lawless settlers who entered the new lands in advance of the time set by the government. Whenever the officers saw a sooner they took a snapshot of him; then, when he came to the land office to complete the filing of his claim, he would be confronted with his picture and his filing disallowed.

Hotchkiss was found dead in a dry wash, his photographic machine rigidly clasped in his hands. When the last picture taken by Hotchkiss was developed, it showed Tex Rankin within a few feet of him leveling a revolver. This proved the Texan's guilt conclusively.

Now, after all the trouble his first capture had caused, another capture was necessary in order to bring him to justice. The scout, while deploring the escape which had made a second pursuit of the man necessary, was nevertheless eager to get the murderer back into the toils of the law.

An hour after the baron had started for Robinson's, the king of scouts rode away on Bear Paw, bound for the cabin on the Washita.

Bear Paw reeled off the miles in spirited fashion and bore his rider swiftly into the trap which circumstances, adroitly taken advantage of by an enemy of the scout's, had laid for him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TEXANS.

There may be nothing in omens, yet certain it is that a very peculiar circumstance happened to the scout shortly after sundown of the day he had started from Kingfisher.

He had crossed the Washita River and was only a few miles from the cabin which was his destination when he glimpsed a camp fire among the trees.

The fire was blazing in a sort of gully, with a wooded slope at the back, and it was with something like a shock that the scout recalled that particular place.

It was almost in that identical spot, several days before, that Little Cayuse had ridden into another camp and had

had his pinto pony stolen. Tex Rankin and three more men from the Lone Star State were in the camp at the time. Cayuse had had a close call, but had managed, by pluck and cunning, not only to save himself, but also to recover Navi.

The scout had returned to the place with the little Piute, only to find that Rankin and his men had left.

Curious to know who it was that had now pitched camp in that ill-omened gully, the scout spurred boldly forward and drew rein within the circle of light from the fire.

Five men were clustered around the blaze. One of them was just serving up a supper of fried bacon, coffee and corn pone.

There was a rough-and-ready, not to say lawless, air about the entire party. The four who were sitting down, with their tin plates and tin cups in front of them, leaped hastily to their feet.

"Who might you be, stranger?" demanded one of the men, giving the scout a keen sizing.

"Just a traveler, bound south and looking for a little refreshment," the scout replied carelessly. "That coffee and bacon smells good to me."

"We ain't boardin' folks at this hyer camp," growled one of the men.

"You're Southerners?" queried the scout, catching the soft drawl in the voice of each speaker.

"We mout be," answered the second man indefinitely.

"I reckon," observed a third, with a side glance at his companions, "that yo'-all is Buffalo Bill, ain't ye?"

"That's what I'm called, now and then," the scout replied.

"Waal," went on the third man, throwing a certain amount of heartiness into his voice, "I reckon we-all are right glad of a chance to entertain Buffalo Bill. 'Light, friend, an' sit in with us."

The scout threw the reins over Bear Paw's head and slid from his saddle.

"Hadn't yo' better put out yo' hoss, friend?" inquired a fourth member of the party.

"I haven't the time, gentlemen, to bait my horse," said the scout, "for I must be going as soon as I get a few mouthfuls for myself."

He came forward easily, dropping down so that his back was toward Bear Paw and his eyes able to keep track of all five of the men.

So far as his actions were concerned, no one would have surmised that the scout did not consider himself in the company of boon companions. As a matter of fact, however, he was pretty well convinced that these were the Texan friends of Rankin. Being friends of Rankin, they could be nothing less than desperadoes—or anything less than deadly enemies of the scout.

Undoubtedly every one of those men knew just how much Buffalo Bill had done to get a noose around the neck of Tex Rankin. The gruff refusal of a supper had turned into an invitation only after one of the men had recognized the stranger as Buffalo Bill. He had been requested to remain for a purpose. This he knew, and under a careless manner he hid a wary alertness that took subtle note of every move of every man in the party.

The man who was serving the rough fare presented the scout with a tin plate, piled high with food, and with a tin cup filled with coffee.

"Thar ain't nothin' tony about our grub, Buffalo Bill," laughed the food dispenser, "but it's shore warranted ter git a strangle holt on a feller's hunger."

"Then it will do me," returned the scout, "and I'm obliged to you for your kindness in asking me to join you."

He fell to at his meal. One of the men stepped aside. The scout did not move his head until a restless stamping of Bear Paw's feet gave him an excuse to turn. The man who had passed out of the circle lifted suddenly to an erect posture not more than five feet from the scout's back.

"What yo'-all doin' thar, Newt?" called one of the others.

"Lookin' fer a flask o' likker I drapped, jest befo' Hank begun gittin' supper," said Newt.

"Shucks-a-mighty!" haw-hawed another of the unsavory crew. "I found that myse'f, Newt, an' drunk her dry two hours ago. Come back an' eat yo' meal, man. Thar'll be plenty o' time ter hunt fer likker arter we git through."

Buffalo Bill could have sworn that Newt had got behind him for another purpose than the one he had so glibly offered.

"Goin' fur, Buffalo Bill?" inquired Newt.

"I don't know exactly how far," said the scout. "I'm expecting to meet some of my pards, and if they're not where I expect to find them I shall have to go farther."

"How's things up no'th?" asked another.

"In the new territory?"

"Yaas."

"Going finely."

"What's this we-all hyer about that blackguard, Tex Rankin?"

The scout was expecting the talk to get around to Rankin.

"Oh," said he calmly, "Tex killed a marshal and is now in the guardhouse at Reno waiting to be tried for it."

"He's in the gyardhouse, is he?"

"He was yesterday."

"Hyers hopin' they hang 'im," growled Newt, lifting his coffee cup and half-emptying it at one swallow.

There was nothing convincing in Newt's words or manner. He was talking for effect, and perhaps with the hope of beguiling a little information from the scout.

"He'll get his just deserts, all right," declared the scout.

Newt glowered over his coffee cup and the rest of the men shifted restlessly.

"Who all took Tex up?" asked one of the others.

"There were several engaged in the job," answered the scout. "I'm glad to say that I helped."

This line of talk did not ease the tension of the situation in the least. Black looks passed from Texan to Texan, the while Buffalo Bill comfortably munched his bacon and corn pone and drank his coffee.

Buffalo Bill's reputation for being extremely sudden in the use of his weapons had a wholesome effect, at that time. There were five against him, yet not one showed an inclination to face him with firearms. The camp fire cast stray gleams from the handles of the scout's forty-fours, peeping coyly over the tops of their scabbards. The Texans saw the gleams of deadly steel and determined on a safer plan—if one could be devised.

In silence the scout finished his meal and arose to his clinking heels.

"Gentlemen," said he, backing toward Bear Paw, "I thank you for your hospitality. I trust that some time you will give me an opportunity to repay you. I'm proud to say that I never forget my debts or fail to cancel them. Adios!"

For the fraction of a second only he turned his back to mount. A jump landed him in his saddle, and he backed away from the camp, hat in hand. When in the gloom of the timber, he whirled his horse and galloped along the trail.

"The trooper who carried news of the Texans to the fort," he thought, "was well informed. Those men are Rankin's friends, and they'd hesitate at nothing in order to wrest Rankin from the clutches of the law."

A mile down the trail he pulled rein suddenly and backed Bear Paw into the brush. He had only a few minutes to wait before two men came galloping by.

"Sure he's ahead thar, Newt?" asked one.

"Shore he is," came the answer. "He never suspi-cioned a thing."

The scout chuckled as he listened to the receding pattering of hoofs.

"Go on, my jolly Texans," he muttered. "You'll catch a weasel asleep before you find me taking chances with you on a night like this."

Leaving the trail behind him, he laid a direct course for the cabin where he was to meet the baron and Robinson.

The cabin was on a slight elevation. It was an abandoned hovel and, in the circumstances, very naturally looked deserted.

The baron and the marshal, if they were in the place, might or might not strike a light. If they were there, however, their mounts would have to be somewhere near.

Buffalo Bill, since becoming aware of the Texans, was determined to play safe. There was a chance that they knew of the cabin, and the scout was not going to picket out his horse and place himself between those insecure walls.

He made a circuit of the cabin well below the crest of the "rise" and failed to discover any mounts. From this he felt positive that those he was expecting had not arrived.

"I'll sleep out the night in the woods," he decided, "and just loosen Bear Paw's cinches. I may have to ride, and to make a quick start."

Selecting a spot between the cabin and the river bank, he dismounted, passed the bridle reins around a small sapling, and sat down with his back against a tree. An hour passed, and he was startled out of a doze by restless movements of his horse.

"Quiet, old chap!" he whispered, springing to his feet and laying a soothing hand on the neck of the horse.

• Patter, patter, patter came the mellow tattoo of approaching hoofs.

"Friends or foes?" thought the scout, peering from his thicket in the direction of the sound. "If the baron and Robinson are coming," he finished, "well and good; but if it's one or more of the Texans—well, then I'll see that that is well and good, too. Quiet, Bear Paw; not a whimper now, my lad."

CHAPTER X.

OUT OF ONE PERIL AND INTO ANOTHER.

Three men rode out of the gloom of scrub timber that covered the foot of the rise in the direction of the trail. They looked like galloping shadowgraphs.

"Three," muttered the scout from his thicket, "and I'm expecting two. Steady does it, old chap," he added, to Bear Paw. "Give those horses a welcoming whinny and there'll be a fight and perhaps a race. It's better for us to stay here as quiet as possible and see what happens. Three of that Texas crowd, I reckon, are looking for us."

The three horsemen had paused. One of them suddenly moved forward and made his way up the hill. The scout saw him melt into the shadow of the hut and heard a door creak open on rusty hinges. A moment later there came a faint glow through the doorway as of a match. Presently the match went out, and directly afterward a voice floated down from the cabin's shadow.

"He ain't hyar, Newt!"

"That's all we wants ter know," answered one of the black shadows from the foot of the hill. "Come down, Sam."

Sam emerged from the dark on his horse, talking as he made his leisurely way down the slope.

"I reckon he was givin' it to us straight. He's gone ter meet his pards, an' his pards are further south."

"Not on yer life!" called Newt. "Pawnee Bill was in Watona, an' yesterday he was in Cloud Chief. I seen him in Cloud Chief when I went thar arter corn meal."

"Yesterday!" snorted Sam. "Shucks-a-mighty, Newt, ye mean ter-day. It ain't midnight yit."

"Waal, what's the use'n splittin' hairs?" answered Newt crossly. "Ter-day, then. When Pawnee Bill left Cloud Chief he went to'rds Kingfisher. That's one o' Buffler Bill's pards what ain't goin' ter meet him ter the south."

Sam rejoined his two companions, and they started toward the river. Buffalo Bill, seeing that the Texans must pass close to him, and desiring to hear what more they had to say, made a nosebag of his hat for Bear Paw, and calmly waited. The Texans, riding slowly, were soon within earshot.

"When was they allowin' ter take Rankin ter Fort Smith?" asked the voice of Sam.

"Scarred Face'll bring us word in plenty o' time," answered Newt. "The Cheyenne is circulatin' around the fort an' keepin' his ears open."

"When he brings the word," spoke up the third man, "then we hikes fer the place whar we're ter lay fer the outfit."

"Check!" said Newt approvingly. "Ye kin see through a cheese, I reckon, when thar's a hole that big in it."

"But what's Buffler Bill goin' south fer?" fretted Sam.

"If it's ter bother us," growled the unnamed Texan, "he'll git inter several kinds o' trouble."

"He'd 'a' got inter trouble ter-night," chuckled Sam, "if Newt had had his way."

"Foolish!" grunted the third man. "The idea o' tryin' ter take a feller like the scout from behind. They say he's got eyes in the back o' his head."

"Foolish yerself," answered Newt. "Buffler Bill's like all the rest o' us—an' the's things kin go on behind his back he don't know about any more'n any one else."

"I kin tell ye fer fair, jest the same," said Sam, "I

don't want him an' his pards mixin' up in this rescue racket s'long's I'm mixed in it. That's how I feel."

"Gittin' cold feet, huh?" taunted Newt.

I'll keep 'em warm enough runnin' if that long-haired Injun fighter comes trailin' arter me."

"Ye're the limit!"

"I expect I am. Thar ain't no poetry about this gittin' cut off in yer youth and bloom. If I was as old as you be, Newt, mebbe I wouldn't mind."

"Buffler Bill didn't go south," piped up the third man, "er you two would hev found him."

"Shore!" said Newt. "He didn't come ter this cabin, whar him an' his pards oncet hung out, an' jest whar he did go is more 'r less of a guess. We'll trail around a leetle afore we goes back ter camp."

This last remark took the three Texans out of earshot. Shortly thereafter they vanished among the shadows at the river's edge. Buffalo Bill removed his hat from Bear Paw's nose and again seated himself.

"Let's get at the gist of this," he muttered, wrinkling his brows thoughtfully. "That old skunk Scarred Face, it seems, is again helping Rankin. The Texans have got wind of the fact that the officers are going to move Rankin, and they're planning to rescue him while the moving is being done."

"The moving was begun before Scarred Face could find it out, and the Texans think the play is yet to be pulled off. They haven't a notion that Rankin is free and is coming this way. With the start he had, Rankin should have been here before now. What's delayed him? Did he have trouble picking up a horse?"

The scout decided that this must have been the reason Tex Rankin hadn't reached his waiting friends on the Washita.

The fugitive was a past master in the horse-lifting line, and probably he had been so careful about showing himself that he had not been able to come near any stealable live stock.

"He'll be along," murmured the scout, pursuing his line of reasoning. "If the baron and Robinson show up before Rankin can get away in company with his Texas friends, I reckon the three of us can take care of the six from the Panhandle. We'll make a try at it, anyhow."

The scout got up and removed the saddle and blanket from Bear Paw's back.

"There, old sport," said he, "you'll be more comfortable and I'll have something to put my head on. No more Texans will drop in on us to-night. What happens to-morrow—well, we'll let to-morrow take care of itself."

Lying at full length on the ground, his head pillowed on his saddle, the scout fell to figuring on the baron's progress toward Robinson's with the letter, and the progress of the baron and the marshal toward the Washita in obedience to the letter's message.

"At the most," thought the scout, "they shouldn't have been more than two hours behind me. The fact that they're several hours behind schedule implies that the baron had trouble finding Robinson. Robinson may have been away from home. In that event, the baron would have had to wait. But they'll come, and here's hoping that they arrive before it's too late to stop Tex Rankin. If Rankin shows up, I'll have to make a try at him single-handed."

He fell asleep then, and awoke just as the first faint

gray of dawn began streaking the eastern sky. A look upward at the cabin assured him that Robinson and the baron had not arrived during the night.

"We'll reconnoitre the Texans' camp, Bear Paw," said the scout, as he saddled, "and see whether Rankin has reached there."

A quick gallop brought the scout to the top of the gully bank at the rear of the enemies' camp. All five of the men were below, stirring around, fixing their fire and getting ready for breakfast.

Tex Rankin was not among them.

"Good!" muttered the scout, as he turned Bear Paw along the back track. "The longer Rankin delays, the better it's going to be for law and order in the end. I'll hustle back to the cabin and wait for the baron and the marshal. If they should drop in there and not find me keeping house, they might get the idea that I had arrived and left—because of their delay. That wouldn't do. If the Texans come back to the place, ahead of the baron and Robinson, I'll give them a warm welcome."

From the foot of the hill he spurred directly up to the cabin, dropping Bear Paw's reins at the door, dismounting and going inside.

The door was unlocked. He had expected this, but after he had surveyed the interior of the old house he would not have been surprised if his expectations had been disappointed.

There was a big change in the place. The changes all indicated that the hut had been recently inhabited by some one who had come to stay—at least, for a time.

The interior of the hut had been cleaned out. New glass had replaced the broken panes of the window. The room was furnished, after a fashion. There was a table in one end of it, and a chair in front of it. The furniture was all of the rudest description, but it indicated that the old house had been requisitioned by some one, and made habitable.

The window was open, and the morning sun was shining in.

"There's furniture here," muttered the scout, "and no one but me to make use of it. Aside from the furniture, there seems little else to make a person comfortable."

He crossed the room, turned toward the table, and then saw something on the table that caught and held his attention.

"What the nation is that?" he asked himself. "Where did it come from? As an ornament, it seems a little out of place. Any sort of bric-a-brac would be too much of a luxury in such surroundings."

He stepped closer to the table. The object that met his gaze was a small image, perhaps six inches high, representing an Indian, sitting cross-legged with his arms folded. But where the Indian's head should have been there was the head of a bull buffalo.

The queer statue was chiseled from reddish stone. The sun struck it, and two eyes, like beads of jet, lit up fiercely under the bright rays.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the scout, sinking into the chair in front of the table. "What's the matter with that thing? What is there about it to hold my attention as it does?"

He leaned forward and reached out his hand to pick up the image, but his hand dropped powerless before his fingers could touch it.

At the same moment a head was thrust through the open window—a head with braids falling down in front of the ears, a tawny face and eyes that glittered mercilessly.

The scout sank back in his chair, his eyes caught and held in a weird spell.

The head was thrust farther through the window, a moccasined foot was thrown over the sill and a lithe form, clutching a knife in one hand, dropped silently into the room behind the scout.

CHAPTER XI.

A NIGHT ENCOUNTER.

"Over yander's the dry wash whar Jack Hotchkiss got done up," remarked old Nomad, as he, and Little Cayuse, and Pawnee Bill, and the baron, and Robinson galloped south.

Robinson turned his eyes curiously in the direction indicated.

"Hotchkiss was as game an officer as you'd find anywhere in the Southwest," said he, "and he went down doing his duty. That's about all we marshals get out of our hardest work, anyhow," he added, with some bitterness, "the knowledge that we've done a man's part. It's a fine feeling, but it doesn't buy clothes for the missus and the kids."

"You get fees and mileage, don't you, for every arrest you make?" asked Pawnee Bill.

"A small fee for every arrest; but, if we spend a month tracking a criminal, and don't arrest him, we get no pay and even have to put up our own expenses. We get as much for the arrest of a man who has been 'introducing' as we do for capturing a murderer, or a bank robber."

"What's interducin'?" put in Nomad.

"Selling whisky to the Indians. Of course, as marshals get the same pay for capturing a 'bootlegger' as they do for running down a killer, a good many government officials confine themselves to the 'bootleggers.'"

"You're talking about deputy marshals now, Robinson," said Pawnee Bill.

"Well, a marshal has to have good deputies if he accomplishes much. If deputies don't get enough to make their work worth while they're going to quit their jobs, and the marshal will be in the air."

Night had fallen and the party of riders remained in the saddle and pushed their mounts steadily onward.

"We're in a rush," said Robinson, "but I think we'll make better speed in the end, Pawnee Bill, if we stop and give the animals a rest."

"That's good advice," agreed old Nomad. "I'm pinin' ter git clost ter Buffler in ther shortest possible time, but sometimes the more ye rush the less quicker ye git whar ye're a-goin'."

"Halt it is," said the prince of the bowie.

All the members of the party drew down, slipped out of their saddles and unrove their cinches.

The stopping place was in the timber where the shadows of the trees lay thickest.

Pawnee Bill had enough rations left to give them all something to satisfy their hunger, and after they ate they smoked, the tobacco glowing in their pipe bowls or trailing sparks as the night wind blew about them.

"I figger," observed the old trapper, "thet we'll git whar we're goin' not far the other side o' midnight."

"Buffalo Bill will be safe until to-morrow morning, anyhow," said Robinson.

"Meanin' which?" demanded the trapper.

"Well, even if the scout is at the cabin, he can be depended on to protect himself from the half-breed."

"If he was expectin' the half-breed, yes. But he ain't."

"Expecting him or not," dropped in Pawnee Bill, "that breed would have a hard time of it getting the upper hand of Pard Bill."

"Der t'ing I vas afraidt oof is dot Ke-veek totem," said the baron. "Oof der haluf-preed shprings dot on der sgout, meppy our bard vill haf more as a handtful."

"Thet's ther idee!" exclaimed the trapper, suddenly apprehensive. "Buffer mout take keer o' ther breed, but when ther breed comes at him with thet whiskizoo Ke-week thing, I'm fearful o' what'll happen."

"The Ke-week totem won't work in the dark," averred the marshal. "Buffalo Bill has got to be able to see it before it will have any effect on him."

"Sufferin' centipedes!" muttered old Nomad, relieved. "I hadn't thort o' thet, but et's er fact. Buffer won't be in no danger from thet totem till mornin'."

"And not then," said Pawnee Bill. "He's got a better head than the rest of you fellows, and this totem will only have to look at him once before it throws up its hands."

The prince of the bowie ended his remark with a good-natured laugh.

"You shtill t'ink dot ve make some foolishness mit dot Ke-veek totem, hey?" inquired the baron.

The baron was smoking a pipe which he had borrowed from Robinson, the latter having lighted a cigar. Before Pawnee Bill could reply to his Dutch pard, the sharp crack of a revolver pierced the night, followed by a smashing sound and a yell from the baron.

Instantly every member of the party had jumped erect, hands wandering instinctively to revolvers.

"What was that?" demanded Robinson sharply.

"On-she-ma-da!" answered the prince of the bowie. "Some one shook out a load at the baron. Did it touch you, pard?" he asked of the Dutchman.

"Donnervetter!" howled the baron. "Der pullet ditn't hit me, no, aber it hit der pipe und knocked him to shmidereens. I vill make drouple for der feller vat dit it!"

He leaped away on foot, the others pausing to pull up their cinches, fling themselves on their horses and then hustle after him. Pawnee Bill led the baron's mule.

A sputter of revolvers echoed through the dark woods ahead and easily guided the party in the direction taken by the Dutchman. When they came up with him the

baron was behind a tree, his revolver flashes marking his location in the gloom.

"Dere iss more as a tozen oof der velps!" yelled the baron.

"How do you know?" demanded Pawnee Bill.

"From der noise vat dey make gedding droo der pushes."

"Take your mule, baron, and we'll make front on the ki-yis."

The baron climbed into his saddle, and the party started pellmell after their unseen foes.

"Who the blazes can they be?" queried the marshal.

"Probably Scarred Face and his bucks," answered the prince of the bowie.

"Mebbeso ther breed's with 'em!" shouted the old trapper. "Hyar's er chanst ter lay ther breed by ther heels an' blockade further purceedin's ag'inst Buffer!"

There was a wild crashing among the bushes ahead, the sound growing louder and louder in the ears of the pursuers. Then, unexpectedly, there was a series of livid flashes all around them, followed by a rattle of exploding revolvers and the hiss and snarl of bullets.

"A surround!" roared Pawnee Bill. "Take the red nearest you, pards, and give him his what-for!"

"They're ours, amigos!" whooped a strange voice—a voice which, to the amazement of the prince of the bowie, could not by any stretch of the imagination have belonged to an Indian.

There followed a whirl of battle, there in the darkness and among the trees and undergrowth. Pawnee Bill bumped into somebody full tilt. From the sounds that followed he figured that the man he had collided with had been bowled over. There were oaths a-plenty, and then the prince of the bowie felt something slap against his neck and twine tightly around it. Simultaneously there came a jerk which almost hurled the bowie man from his saddle.

With a quick lifting of his left hand he caught the sinuous thing that had gripped his throat and braced himself in the saddle. The thing he held gave way at the farther end, and the man who had wielded it could be heard regaining the back of his horse and racing off.

Pawnee Bill followed him, hammering through the night regardless of anything and everything but the man ahead. For several minutes the race lasted, and then the man in advance mysteriously but effectually disappeared.

For half an hour the prince of the bowie hunted for the fellow, finally giving up and returning toward the spot where he had separated from his companions.

None of the others were there.

"They're away looking for the men who attacked us," thought Pawnee Bill. "They'll be back here after a while."

But, although the prince of the bowie waited for an hour, not one of his missing companions returned. Thinking they might have made their way back to the place where the camp had been pitched, Pawnee Bill went there. He was disappointed, however, for the spot held no trace of his companions.

"Here's a go!" he muttered. "Are they chasing that outfit, which made such an unexpected attack on us, or have they been captured, or got lost in the timber?"

Pawnee Bill was in a quandary—a quandary that had to do with unpleasant details.

The startling nature of the attack, coupled with the fact that it had been made by whites, puzzled him. Why had white men been mixed up in the attack, when the only known foes he and his companions had were a half-breed and four Cheyennes?

Pawnee Bill was asking himself a good many questions which he found it impossible to answer. Sitting on his horse, waiting and listening for some evidence of his approaching pards, he pulled through his fingers the object which had so nearly jerked him out of his saddle.

He discovered that it was a long blacksnake whip. A queer thing, that, for a rider to be carrying!

As Pawnee Bill figured it, in colliding with the owner of the whip the man had been thrown from his horse and had lost his guns. Unable to shoot, he had made use of the whip. The quickness of the bowie man had foiled his enemy's effort to get him off his horse, and the whip handle had been jerked clear of the hand that had held it.

"I'm ahead a whip and out a few pards," thought Pawnee Bill grimly. "The only thing I can do is to stay here until morning. If none of my pards come, I'll start for the cabin, looking for them on the way. Call me a greaser if I can understand this thing at all."

He waited out the rest of the night, peering into the darkness and listening intently. Nomad did not come back, nor the baron, nor Cayuse, nor Robinson.

At the first faint gray of morning the puzzled Pawnee Bill started through the woods in the direction of the cabin where, he believed, the scout was intending to join the marshal.

CHAPTER XII.

BLACKSNAKE MAGIC.

As near as Pawnee Bill could judge, he rode over the place where he and his pards had had their night clash with the mysterious enemy. The bushes were trampled and torn, and he found a red cotton handkerchief, folded cornerwise, which some one had tied around his neck.

But he discovered nothing more—not the slightest clue as to the fate that had overtaken his companions.

"It's possible," he thought, "they've gone on to the cabin, expecting to find me there."

Cheered by the thought, he put Chick-Chick to a faster pace, galloping through the woods and snapping at twigs and branches with the whiplash as he passed.

Pawnee Bill had earned well his title of "prince of the bowie" by marvelous dexterity in handling the two-edged blade. Equal facility with a riata had caused him, more than once, to be termed "the rope wizard." His skill extended also to the blacksnake whip, which, in hands trained to its use, can become a most dangerous weapon.

"The ki-yi that snapped at me last night with this blacksnake," muttered the prince of the bowie, "was a duffer. More by luck than design, he got the coil squarely around my neck in the dark, and then he failed to work through the trick as he ought to have done."

With a swish and a snap, Pawnee Bill twined the lash around the top of a bush, ten feet away, gave his arm a backward throw, and cut off the bush top, jerking it toward him and catching it out of the air with his left hand.

"That's the way!" he exclaimed, and coiled the whip around his saddle horn.

As he continued on, mechanically alert to detect any sign of his pards, his thoughts harked back to the attack of the night.

"That first shot," he mused, "was fired at the baron's glimmering pipe bowl. Our Dutch pard had a close call, all right enough. But who were those whites? And why did they take us for enemies? Likely enough they're holdups, roaming around the border of the new territory and ready to attack any one and every one with any personal property to be levied on.

"That's it!" he exclaimed decisively. "They're a lawless gang, that outfit, and just happened to run across us last night. I hope Nomad, the baron, and the rest won't get into any further trouble with them."

At this point he splashed across the river and up the opposite bank. Only a short distance now separated him from the cabin, and once more he put Chick-Chick to the gallop.

Intending to approach the cabin by the river slope, he followed the water's edge. When near the place where the timber broke away, leaving a cleared ascent up the hill to the hut, he suddenly drew rein.

In front of him, hitched to a tree, was a claybank cayuse! One look at the animal convinced him that it was the same horse he had seen on the preceding day. Another look at a half-moon scar on the cayuse's hip still further proved that he was Little Hatchet's mount.

"Scoot-a-wah-boo!" murmured Pawnee Bill. "The Breed's here. Is he at the house, I wonder, and, if so, what is he doing there?"

He spurred cautiously out of the timber and swept his eyes up the slope. The side of the cabin was plainly before him; and, standing at an open window and peering through it, was no less a personage than the half-breed himself.

"What's he looking at inside?" thought the prince of the bowie. "There's something in the hut that has captured his attention. Ah!" he finished, "he's drawing a knife and climbing through the window. I guess it's about time I got busy."

Pawnee Bill allowed his reins to dangle from the bit rings, slid to the ground, took the blacksnake from the saddle horn, and started swiftly up the hill.

The half-breed was getting inside the house very carefully. By the time he had disappeared from the opening, the bowie man had almost reached it. Presently he was at the window, staring wide-eyed at the scene before him.

Buffalo Bill was sitting in front of a table. An image—easily identified by Pawnee Bill as the Ke-week totem—stood on the table in front of him. The scout, leaning back in his chair, was staring at the totem as though fascinated. Behind him, creeping up on him with naked knife in his hand and with malevolent hate glowing in his tawny face, was the half-breed.

For a brief instant, the prince of the bowie was as fascinated by the spectacle unrolled before him as the scout seemed to be by the totem; then, swiftly, the bowie man thrust the upper half of his body through the window.

He made some noise, but the half-breed was so wrapped up in his murderous plans against the scout that he neither saw the prince of the bowie nor heard him.

Gripping the whip handle firmly, the bowie man gave the whip a slight circular movement and then threw his right arm forward.

The whip coiled through the air like a sinuous black streak. With a snap like the crack of a pistol the lash twined itself about the half-breed's right arm. It was neatly and swiftly done—and not until that moment did the assassin become aware that some one else was taking a hand in his murderous game.

With a swift backward jerk, Pawnee Bill disarmed the half-breed. Buffalo Bill still sat staring at the totem.

"Necarnis!" roared the bowie man, throwing himself through the window.

The half-breed, with a bound like a tiger, made an attempt to escape by the door. Pawnee Bill grabbed him before he could execute his design and the two toppled to the floor in a furious set-to.

Over and over they rolled, the half-breed clawing, scratching, and biting like a wild cat.

He was a larger man than Pawnee Bill, but his mus-

cles were no match for the bowie man's, and he had not half the skill.

With a lightninglike movement, the prince of the bowie got astride his antagonist's body and twined the fingers of one hand around his throat. Then, slowly but surely, he strangled the half-breed into submission.

When the half-breed's struggles had died down, and he lay gasping like a spent fish, Pawnee Bill whipped the belt from his prisoner's waist, whirled him over and bound his arms behind him. The handkerchief picked up on the scene of the night clash was twisted into a rope and made fast about the prisoner's feet.

Pawnee Bill then got up and leaned breathlessly against the wall, his eyes wandering from the prostrate half-breed to Buffalo Bill.

Apparently unconscious of the danger through which he had just passed, and of the struggle that had just taken place, the king of scouts still sat in the chair before the table, his eyes glued on the image before him.

A thrill ran through Pawnee Bill's nerves. Was it possible, after all, that the Ke-week totem possessed some occult power? Certainly the scout had yielded to the uncanny influence of the monstrous image—yielded as completely, it seemed, as had the baron, Nomad, and Robinson.

"I say, necarnis!" shouted Pawnee Bill, stepping to the scout's side.

The scout did not answer him by word or sign. The prince of the bowie, leaning forward, seized the totem with nervous fingers and turned its face to the wall.

The next moment he bounded out of the hut and down the river slope. Scooping up a hatful of water, he hastened back to the cabin and turned the sombrero upside down over the scout's head.

Something like a shiver ran through the scout's huge frame. He lifted his hands to his face and began clearing his dripping eyes. Another moment and he started to his feet, his spurred heels jingling. He leaned against the table and slowly turned on his pard.

"By the shades of Unk-te-hee!" exclaimed the bowie man. "Don't you sabe who I am, necarnis? What ails you?"

"Is that you, Pawnee?" asked the scout dazedly.

"No one else, pard."

"Where have you come from?"

"From the big head of the Washita. I was on my way to Kingfisher when I met the baron, and Cayuse, and Robinson——"

"What the deuce is the matter with me?" burst out the scout.

"Have I been asleep?"

"Your mind has been a good ways off, necarnis, when it ought to have been right here."

"Did I dream about that strange image, or was it really here?"

"It was here, all right enough."

The scout turned and his eyes fell on the back of the pipestone idol. He reached out to lay hands on it and turn it around, but the prince of the bowie restrained him.

"Pass that up for now, necarnis," said Pawnee Bill. "Don't look that thing in the eyes—just yet. I don't understand it, and this is hardly the time to make experiments. You're here, and I'm here; so let's figure a little on what we're up against."

Buffalo Bill, his brain rapidly clearing, jerked the chair around and dropped into it.

"You're here, yes," said he, "and that's something I can't understand. Who's that on the floor?"

"That's a breed who was trying to knife you from behind."

"Knife me from behind?"

"Nothing else. You were hocused by that Ke-week totem and the breed was creeping up behind you."

"You prevented him from using the knife?"

"I was lucky enough to be around."

"How?"

"I leaned through the open window and disarmed the breed with that blacksnake whip. There's magic in the totem, and magic in the blacksnake. As it happened," and he laughed, "my magic was too much for the breed."

"I never saw that half-breed before," declared the scout. "What has he got against me?"

"Give it up. He had enough against you, though, so that he was going to settle scores with the knife."

Buffalo Bill got up and walked unsteadily toward the prisoner.

CHAPTER XIII.

A TIGHT PINCH.

The half-breed had recovered his breath and his wits. His eyes were open and he was glaring defiantly at the scout.

"Who are you?" the scout demanded.

A snarl of rage was his only response.

"Why were you trying to get at me with that knife?"

The prisoner stopped his snarling. A look of fierce hate crossed his face, but he sullenly refused to speak.

"Did you leave that strange image on the table?" proceeded the scout.

Still no reply from the prisoner.

"He won't talk, necarpis," spoke up Pawnee Bill, "but perhaps I can tell you something about the breed and that totem. Sit down again. You're a little unsteady yet."

The bowie man shoved the chair forward and the scout lowered himself into it.

"Mighty strange," he muttered, "what it was that came over me. There's a lot of explaining to be done, Pawnee, and if you're qualified to do any of it, go ahead."

"Just a minute."

The bowie man knelt at the prisoner's side and began searching his clothes. From the breast of the flannel shirt he drew out a heavily weighted bag which he dropped clinking on the floor.

"What's that?" inquired Buffalo Bill.

"Five hundred in gold which Nomad collected for me over on the Cimarron."

"Your money! How did the breed get it away from Nomad?"

"I'll come to that in a minute."

Pawnee Bill next recovered a pipe and a tobacco pouch.

"Those belong to the baron," said the scout.

"And so does this," supplemented Pawnee Bill, dropping a knife on the growing pile of recovered property.

"How did the breed get them from the baron, Pawnee?" asked the perplexed scout.

"The same way that he got this from the baron," and Pawnee Bill pulled a letter from the shirt.

"Great guns!" gasped the scout. "Why, that's the letter I gave to the baron for Robinson."

"An-pe-tu-we! The breed's quite a collector. You notice, Pard Bill, that the letter has been opened?"

"I see that."

"Well, it was the letter that gave the breed a line on your movements. Because of it he came here and laid a trap for you."

"A trap?"

"Sure—with that Pawnee totem."

The prince of the bowie pointed toward the table.

"Where did the totem come from?" the scout asked.

Pawnee Bill told of the mission of Little Hatchet; of his buying the totem for the Kiowas, and of the capture of the totem and of his claybank cayuse by the white man.

"Somehow," proceeded Pawnee Bill, "the totem and the claybank cayuse got into the hands of this breed. He met the baron, going to Robinson's with your letter, and by means of the totem he worked a hocus-pocus and stripped the baron of his guns, his pipe, knife—and the letter. The baron, when he came to, trailed the breed to Robinson's, getting to the marshal's ranch just as the marshal and Nomad were worrying through the fog end of a trance. Nomad, on his way back from the Cimarron, had stopped at Robinson's for a while. The totem hypnotized both Nick and the marshal, and the breed got away with my five hundred."

The scout drew a long breath.

"What else?" he asked. "There's more to this, Pawnee."

The bowie man went on to explain how Cayuse had left the Kiowas, had found the wounded Little Hatchet, and had learned how a white scoundrel had taken the totem and the claybank cayuse from the Kiowa. Then he described Cayuse's meeting with the breed, his recognizing the claybank, and attempting force against the claybank's rider only to be stopped by the totem.

"That totem," muttered the scout, "must have been carved by the Arch Fiend and imbued with infernal powers. Nearly all our pards seem to have fallen victims to its baneful influence. What happened to you, Pawnee?"

Pawnee set forth his own part in recent events, telling of the mysterious attack during the night, of his failure to find any of his pards, of his riding on to the hut, and of getting to the hut just in time to exercise a little "blacksnake magic" in behalf of the scout.

For several minutes the scout sat silently in his chair, thinking over the weird train of events which had brought about the present situation.

"I reckon," said he finally, "that I can let in a little light. I'll bet a blue stack, Pawnee, that the white man who shot Little Hatchet and took the Indian's horse and the Pawnee totem was Tex Rankin."

"Rankin!" exploded the bowie man. "How can that be, necarnis, when Rankin is at the fort with the other three sooners, awaiting trial for the killing of Jack Hotchkiss?"

"Rankin isn't at the fort," returned the scout. "Read that letter of mine and you'll understand."

Pawnee Bill snatched up the letter, pulled it from the envelope and read it through.

"Escaped!" he muttered; "Tex Rankin has escaped!"

"That's the size of it," said the scout.

"And you're of the opinion, Pard Bill, that it was Tex Rankin who shot Little Hatchet and stole his horse and the totem?"

"Yes. Tex Rankin escaped from the officers on foot, and it was necessary for him to have a horse."

"But that hardly proves that he took Little Hatchet's!"

"I think it does when you consider the venomous disposition that breed displays toward me. I gather that he's a friend of Rankin's, and that Rankin put up this job at the hut and hired the breed to carry it through for him."

"There's a possibility that you have it right, necarnis," reflected Pawnee Bill. "But what did Rankin know about that totem and its devilish powers? What did the breed know about them? It's the totem that has caused all the trouble. I've been among the Pawnees for thirty years and never knew that Ke-week totem was a trance producer!"

"Now, Pawnee," said the scout, "you're leading up to a point where common sense and reason are staggered

by a knockout blow. I can't understand why a pipe-stone image should have such baneful effects upon me and my pards. We'll let that go, for the present, and concern ourselves about Tex Rankin and his present whereabouts.

"He has friends camped in this vicinity—in that old gully where Cayuse first encountered the sooners—and I'll make a guess that three of those men, who came to this cabin last night, were the ones who set upon your party in the timber. But we'll see what we can learn from the breed."

The scout shifted his eyes on the prisoner. The half-breed had been listening to the talk that had passed between the pards and an expression, as of wonder, had crossed his face. That expression had changed to one of grim satisfaction, and again to sullen defiance as the scout dropped his eyes to his face.

"Who was that white man who shot the Kiowa and took the Kiowa's horse and the Ke-week totem?" demanded Buffalo Bill.

"Him Rankin," grunted the breed.

"I didn't think he'd admit it," muttered Pawnee Bill. "The fact that he does admit it gives me a hunch that he's lying."

"I don't think so," said the scout. "He has everything to gain and nothing to lose by making a clean breast of this matter. Rankin gave you the claybank horse and the totem?" he went on, to the prisoner.

"Wuh!"

"Why did he give up his horse to you? He needed a horse pretty badly himself."

"My cayuse fresh, claybank tired," explained the breed. "Rankin take fresh cayuse."

"I see. Rankin hired you to come to this cabin and waylay me, did he?"

"Wuh."

"How did Rankin know I was to be here?"

"Paper talk tell um."

"He's lying," rapped out Pawnee Bill sharply. "It was the breed himself who got the paper talk from the baron, and at the time he got it he was riding the claybank cayuse and had the totem. He's not giving the straight of this, necarnis."

"Me see um Rankin after me ketch um paper talk," explained the half-breed glibly.

Pawnee Bill turned away with a snort of contempt.

"Let what he tells you, Pard Bill," advised the bowie man, "go in one ear and out of the other. It's not worth listening to."

"Where is Tex Rankin now?" asked the scout.

"Me take you where you find um," replied the prisoner. "You go, huh?"

"Not yet a while," answered the scout. "There's something about you that's crooked. I'll find out what it is before I make any bargain to follow you to Ran-

kin. Pawnee!" he cried, turning suddenly on the bowie man, "you'd better keep away from that."

Pawnee Bill had turned the Ke-week totem around on the table and was staring at it.

"I'm experimenting, necarnis," answered Pawnee Bill. "If Ke-week puts it over on me, just trot down to the river, get a hatful of water, and throw it on me. That will—On-she-ma-da, what a queer feeling I'm getting! I joshed the baron and Nomad about letting the totem take a fall out of them, but call me a greaser if—if——"

Pawnee Bill's words died away into silence. Standing rigid and erect in front of the table, he went into the usual condition of one who peered for a few seconds into the eyes of the buffalo god.

The scout got up and started toward his pard. At the same instant a revolver cracked outside the hut and a bullet zipped into the room. The scout whirled, startled. At that moment he caught a glimpse of Newt, the Texan, just fading from the open door.

The Texans were attacking the hut!

Here was a pinch, and a tight one. The scout was alone, with the prisoner to look after.

"Pawnee!" he roared desperately.

But Pawnee Bill stood quietly in front of the table, unaware of the perils that threatened. With a leap the scout reached the door and slammed it shut; the next moment he whirled on the window and sent a shot through it as a warning.

CHAPTER XIV.

REENFORCEMENTS ARRIVE FOR THE PARDS.

After putting the shot through the window, the scout's next move was characteristic of his iron firmness during a crisis. With a jump he reached the table, caught up the Ke-week totem and hurled it on the floor. It crashed into a dozen pieces. Planting his heel on the buffalo head he ground it into powder.

"So much for that," he muttered, between his teeth. "Ke-week has claimed his last victim. Now to get out of this fix the totem has got us into."

Through a chink in the log walls the scout surveyed the situation outside the cabin. The five Texans from the camp of the desperadoes had all come to the attack. They must have discovered that the scout was in the place quite early that morning, and have assembled in force for the assault.

Two of the Texans had the trunk of a small tree. The scout at first thought they were intending to use it as a battering-ram against the door. The door was not fastened and there was no bar or lock for it. Buffalo Bill had pushed the table against it, but a strong push would have sent the table flying.

The tree trunk was not to be used as a battering-ram, however. The two Texans dropped it hastily, its lower end on the ground and its upper end against the edge of the roof.

"Ah!" muttered the scout, "they're planning to drop in on us from overhead! We'll call that move right now." ✓

In order to keep the dazed Pawnee Bill out of the way of flying lead, the scout grabbed him by the shoulders and forced him down behind the overturned table. After that, the scout did some firing between the logs, winging Sam, the Texan, just as he was halfway between the ground and the roof.

Sam fell from the tree trunk with a howl, sprang up and raced down the hill, clasping his left arm with his right hand as he went.

All the Texans retreated. A little way down the hill, on the side below the window, was a bit of a cut-out crossing the hill slope.

This cut-out could be made to serve as a rifle pit, and into it all five of the Texans tumbled. Then, carefully keeping their bodies out of sight, the desperadoes began shooting at the cabin. Lead spatted through the window, and now and again a slug found entrance between the logs. The scout had several close calls, but not nearly so many as he would have had if the bullets had not entered the cabin at such a high angle. Most of the lead went into the top of the wall, opposite the window, and some of it struck the roof rafters.

All the while this merry give-and-take was in progress, Pawnee Bill, wide-eyed and utterly oblivious of what was going forward, lay behind the table.

In due course he began to revive, just as the baron, Nomad, Robinson, and Cayuse had revived. The rattle of revolvers in his ears confused him not a little.

"Wh-wh-what in Sam Hill is going on?" he called, rising to his knees and staring around him. "Nomad! Baron! Cayuse! What's the trouble?"

"Pull yourself together, Pawnee," answered the scout, pulling trigger with the muzzle of his six-shooter between the logs. "We're picking a bone with the Texans, but they're careful to keep out of sight and not give me much of a chance at them."

"That you, necarnis?" mumbled the bowie man.

"Yes."

"I guess the totem's all Nomad says it is. It certainly got me and—and——"

"It won't get you or anybody else again, Pawnee," declared the scout. "I've cooked Ke-week's goose for him."

"What have you done?"

"Look on the floor in front of you."

Confusedly Pawnee Bill stared at the shattered image, pushing his fingers through the fragments and groping toward the light with his disordered mind.

"Broken!" he muttered.

"I tried to make the wreck complete," said the scout.

His attention, just then, was drawn to a fresh move on the part of the Texans. They were distributing themselves along the crease in the hillside, some of them reaching a point where their bullets would angle through the window in such a way as to sweep the greater part of the hut's interior.

"Get your wits back as soon as possible, Pawnee," said the scout. "Those Texans will have us jumping around in here like peas on a hot griddle in half a minute."

"I'm getting all right, necarnis," answered the bowie man, lifting himself upright against the wall and peering out between the logs. "Of course those ki-yis had to jump the cabin just when I was down and out on account of that infernal totem. What've they done with our horses?"

"That's too many for me. I left Bear Paw in front of the door. I suppose they have taken the mounts off into the woods. There they go!" he added suddenly. "Look out!"

The revolvers sputtered down the slope and bullets smacked into the room. One of the leaden missiles ripped a hole in Pawnee Bill's sleeve.

"That wakes me up completely, Pard Bill!" cried the prince of the bowie. "Here's where I get into the turmoil with both guns."

Drawing his weapons, he poked their muzzles between the logs. Before he could fire, however, some one else began firing from farther below the Texans, at the edge of the timber.

Bang, bang! went the concealed six-shooters, kicking up the dust in the rear of the besiegers.

The result, so far as the Texans were concerned, was ludicrous. As one man they leaped from their trench and laid a bee line down the hill, hustling for all they were worth to get away from the hut and from the marksmen in the woods.

"What does that mean?" cried Pawnee Bill.

"It means that our missing pards have shown up," laughed the scout. "Those fellows are legging it like a lot of antelopes. Ah! See there, Pawnee!" The scout stepped to the window and pointed in the direction of the timber line. "Robinson, Nomad, and Little Cayuse! They're riding up here and they've got Bear Paw, Chick-Chick, and the claybank!"

"Scoot-a-wah-boo!" jubilated the bowie man, throwing the table from the door and hurling the door open. "This way, pards!" he yelled, placing himself in plain view of those below.

The trapper and the marshal gave vent to delighted yells and waved their hats. The scout, stepping out beside Pawnee Bill, hurried down the slope with him to meet the reinforcements.

"Waal," exulted old Nomad, "I reckon we got hyar in time ter chase away them pizen coyotes! An' you, Pawnee, must er got hyar right in ther nick ter keep Buffler from gittin' his gruel. How erbout et?"

"He did," answered the scout.

"Where have you fellows been?" demanded Pawnee Bill. "What's become of the baron?"

"We haven't seen anything of the baron since we got separated last night, Pawnee Bill," answered Robinson. "We were all scattered, and all hunting for one another. I found Nomad, an hour or two after the men that attacked us had vanished, and along about morning we discovered Cayuse."

"The three of us then went hunting for you and the baron. We had to give it up, after a while, and decided that it would be best to ride on here. We had a notion that you and the baron, after missing us, might make for this place."

"I had the same notion about you," laughed Pawnee Bill.

"You don't suppose, do you," struck in the scout, "that the Texans wiped out our Dutch pard?"

"I'm too happy for gruesome thoughts, necarnis," returned the bowie man. "Anyhow, I don't believe that the Texan lives who can wipe out the baron. He's probably lost himself in the woods, or else his mule has developed a contrary mood and won't take the baron where he wants to go. He'll show up, sooner or later, I'll gamble."

"Seen anythin' o' Ke-week?" grinned old Nomad.

"We've sponged Ke-week off the slate," answered Pawnee Bill.

"How's that?" questioned Robinson.

"Buffalo Bill smashed the totem, and you can look at it now till you're gray-headed without ever getting a drowsy feeling."

"Ugh!" muttered Little Cayuse. "Kiowas feel heap mad."

"We've kept the Kiowas from a lot of foolishness," said the scout.

"The Kiowas are out twenty ponies, but it was a cheap price to pay for getting rid of the totem," added Pawnee Bill. "I did you a wrong, Nick—you, and Robinson, and the baron, and Cayuse. The totem accomplished all that you said it did. How the image managed it I don't know, but it certainly was the goods. It got Pard Bill on the run, and then I experimented and got on the run myself. Whoosh! what a feeling it gave a man."

"Totem him heap big medicine," declared Cayuse.

"How do you explain the effect the totem's eyes had on a person, Buffalo Bill?" queried Robinson.

"I'm not trying to explain it," was the scout's answer. "Psychology will have to be dug into for an explanation, and psychology is a bee I never had buzzing in my sombrero. There's something else, just now,

which you ought to know, Robinson. It's the thing I wanted you to meet me here for. Tex Rankin was being removed from Reno to Smith—and he escaped on the road."

This was a bombshell for the marshal, Nomad, and Cayuse. The scout explained briefly.

"Now," he finished, "the half-breed prisoner admits that he got the claybank pony and the totem from Rankin, and he will take us to where Rankin is—or so he says. Pawnee and I, however, think the breed is crooked, and that he's trying to work some sort of a game on us. We might go up to the hut and talk with him further; then——"

Little Cayuse interrupted the scout with a shrill whoop. "Half-breed make um getaway!" he yelled, pointing. Startled eyes were turned down the river slope of the hill. The little Piute was right. The half-breed was two-thirds of the way to the river and going like a streak.

"He's slipped his bonds and made off!" roared Pawnee Bill. "Chase after him!"

Pawnee Bill jumped for Chick-Chick's saddle, while the scout threw himself upon Bear Paw. The claybank, for the time being, was left to his own devices. All the pards, just then, were giving their entire attention to the pursuit of the half-breed.

CHAPTER XV.

A STUNNING SURPRISE.

The escaped prisoner was without a horse. Nomad, Robinson, and Cayuse had picked up the claybank presumably close to the place where they had found Bear Paw and Chick-Chick. The claybank, it will be remembered, had been left by the half-breed near the edge of the river. The half-breed's flight was taking him in the direction of the spot where he evidently believed his horse would be found.

The scout and his pards, charging down the slope at top speed, saw the fugitive run into the timber and out of it again. He was yelling wrathfully and shaking his fists. The horse was not to be found and he was forced to continue his flight on foot.

The pursuers saw him wade out into the river and hurry to get across. In his haste he stumbled and went under three or four times.

"He took ther baron's guns," shouted old Nomad, "but he left 'em on the claybank."

"He hasn't a weapon to his name!" declared Pawnee Bill.

"Unless he picked up his knife from the floor of the hut," added the scout.

"I was forgetting about that," assented the bowie man. "Deserted Jericho! see how he's ducking himself. He'll get across, though, before we can overhaul him."

"It's better anyway to overhaul him on dry ground than in the river," returned the scout.

Just as the foremost of the pards reached the river's edge, the half-breed, wet as a drowned rat, emerged from the water and began splashing his way up the brush-covered bank.

The foremost of the pards happened to be old Nomad, and the moment he saw the fugitive leaving the water, he sat back in his saddle and stared.

"Why don't you go on over, Nomad?" called Robinson, spurring his horse alongside.

"Somethin's ther matter with thet pizen breed!" the old trapper shouted. "Look at him, Buffler! He's changin' color. Gittin' ducked in ther river has had a quare effect on him."

All the pards, by then, were reined up along the river margin, and all were staring as though stunned at the man on the other bank.

The reddish bronze had been washed from his face and hands, and the skin was showing white.

"Call me a greaser if I can sabe this!" muttered Pawnee Bill.

"That fellow is Rankin!" cried the scout. "He had painted or stained his skin and the water washed the stuff off! He's no more a half-breed than we are!"

Amazement filled every one in the scout's party. It seemed impossible to the scout and the bowie man that Tex Rankin, masquerading as a half-breed, could have fooled them so completely. And yet the fact spoke for itself. There was no getting around it.

While the pards sat in their saddles and looked, recovering from their astonishment as best they could, another surprise was sprung.

From a clump of bushes a form leaped out and grappled with Rankin. The fugitive was caught at a disadvantage, and the man who had made the attack had him down on his back before he fairly realized what was going on.

"Vere iss der totem?" yelled the man who was kneeling on Rankin with both knees and worrying at his throat with both hands; "for vy don'd you pull der Keveek totem on me und put me on der blink mit it, hey? Now, py shinks, I ged efen mit you for der drouples vat you made me!"

"Whoop-ya!" yelled old Nomad. "Ef thar ain't our Dutch pard I'm er Piegan!"

"The baron," cried Pawnee Bill, "sure as shooting! He came back at just the right time."

With a tremendous splash every horse took to the water, and the whole surface of the river geysered under the wild plunging of the animals to make speed in getting across. When the pards rode up on the other

bank the baron was still clinging like a leech to his captive.

"I got him, py shiminy grickedsl!" yelled the baron. "Ven I seen him from der pushes gedding into der rifer on der odder site he looked like der haluf-preed, aber ven he come oudt on dis site he don'd look like der haluf-preed. Vat's der answer, Puffalo Pill?"

"The answer is, baron," laughed the scout, "that the half-breed and Tex Rankin are one and the same. Rankin was masquerading as the half-breed, that's all. You remember how Ronney's sorrel thoroughbred was stained to change its color, and how the color came off when Red Jennings rode the horse through a creek? Well, we've discovered Tex Rankin in precisely the same way—and after he had fooled Pawnee and me to the top of our bent."

Robinson, with the help of Nomad and Pawnee Bill, had snapped a pair of handcuffs on Tex Rankin's wrists.

"I've got that confounded Dutchman ter thank fer this!" fumed Rankin. "I ort ter killed him when I had him locoed by the totem. If I had, this wouldn't 'a' happened!"

"Don't fool yourself, Rankin," said Pawnee Bill. "You couldn't have got away from us even if the Dutchman hadn't been here. You were on foot and we'd have overtaken you."

"I'd have got ter some o' my friends," declared Rankin, "an' we could hev made er fight."

"Where did you get that half-breed toggerly, Rankin?" asked the scout.

"Old Scarred Face, who throwed me down at the wind-up, fixed me out with it," glowered the baffled scoundrel. "I wish I had that onnery red whelp whar I could git at him. He was ter come with three buck Cheyennes an' help me—but he never come. If my friends from the Panhandle had knowed the fix I was in, that time they was shootin' up the cabin, they'd never hev took ter their heels like they done. But I didn't dast ter yell out an' let 'em know who I rarely was—that would hev give me away ter Buffler Bill an' Pawnee Bill." He swore roundly at his hard luck. "Who took my hoss away from whar I left him?" he added.

"Charge thet up ter me, an' Robinson, an' Leetle Cayuse, Rankin," grinned the trapper.

"If I'd had the cayuse I'd got erway," the prisoner gritted.

"Mebbeso, ter that," qualified old Nomad. "We was arter ye, hotfooted. Et would hev took er better hoss than the claybank ter show Hide-rack his heels."

"Waal, I'm done," snarled the dispirited Texan. "Take me whar ye're goin' ter, an' let's git it over with."

"What about that totem, Tex?" asked the scout. "Did you know anything about it before you took it away from the Kiowa?"

"I knowed er heap erbout it. Old Crooked Foot useter be a friend o' mine, an' I've seen that totem hocus more'n a dozen Pawnees. It was happenchance entirely that throwed the thing inter my hands. Arter I got away from them orficers, I wanted a hoss. I seen one comin' to'rds me with a Kiowa on his back. I had already grabbed a gun, so I let the Kiowa hev a load out o' it. When he tumbled from the claybank he caught at the breast of his blanket as though ter keep somethin' from gittin' hurt.

"I could 'a' yelled myself blue in the face when I found the thing was that totem o' Crooked Foot's. Takin' the claybank an' the totem, I lit out. Next I run onter Scarred Face. He fixed me out with my half-breed rig an' painted me with stuff out o' his medicine bag. It was a good job he done. He was ter meet me at his house, later on, an' kerry word ter the Texans I'd got loose."

"If you had gone straight south," said the scout, "as soon as you'd taken the cayuse from the Kiowa, you might have got clear."

"I didn't want ter git cl'ar till I'd played even with you an' Pawnee Bill. All my troubles come from the meddlin' o' you two. I had sworn ter squar' up with ye fer what ye'd done ter me. I hadn't much of er idee how I was goin' ter do it, till I held up that Dutchman. It seemed like chance was playin' right inter my hands, all the time. I met the Dutchman an' got that letter he was totin' ter Robinson; then I went on ter Robinson's, an' got that five hundred in gold; then I started south ter lay my trap at that ole cabin.

"All I done, last night, was ter go inter the cabin an' put the totem on the table. I knowed, when Buffler Bill come an' looked at that totem, I'd have him right whar I wanted him. You didn't come till mornin', an' I was reckonin' everythin' 'u'd work out all right till Pawnee Bill showed up with that blacksnake.

"While the Texans was keepin' you fellers busy in the cabin I worked my hands loose; then, when Buffler Bill an' Pawnee Bill went out ter talk with their pards, I freed my feet and dug fer the open."

Pawnee Bill happened to think of his five hundred dollars.

"Did you take that bag of gold with you, Rankin?" he asked. "I left it in the cabin."

"I didn't hev time ter bother with no gold," replied Rankin. "All I wanted was ter git ter the claybank without bein' seen er bowled over with a bullet. Luck was with me, along at the first, but everythin' come the way o' you fellers at the wind-up. I'm done. I've had my leetle run in the open, an' now it's back ter the guardhouse fer mine, I reckon."

"Robinson," spoke up the scout, "you and Pawnee come with me. While Nomad, Cayuse, and the baron are getting Rankin across the river to the cabin, we'll

make a sashay in the direction of the camp of the Texans. If they happen to be there, we'll have a brief exchange of opinions."

"Or bullets," laughed the prince of the bowie. "I'm not particular."

Breaking away from the rest of their pards, the scout, the bowie man, and the marshal recrossed the river and galloped at speed in the direction of the gully where the Texans had pitched their camp.

But the gully was deserted. There were signs that the Texans had pulled up stakes and taken a hurried departure for other parts.

"They were wise to make that move," declared Robinson.

"That last brush they had with us, at the cabin," said the scout, "must have filled them with panic. They didn't lose a second getting out of the way after you, Nomad, and Cayuse showed up and began firing, Robinson. We'll hurry back to the cabin and, just to be on the safe side against the Texans, see how quick we can transfer Rankin from the Washita back to Reno."

"Good idea, necarnis!" approved Pawnee Bill.

The horses were headed for the cabin and the spurs of the three riders rattled sharply.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

Not much time was spent by the pards in the cabin, after Buffalo Bill, Pawnee Bill, and Robinson got back from the gully. The Texans might be hurrying south in the direction of the Panhandle, or they might be hunting for Scarred Face and his three Cheyennes and looking for a likely spot in which to ambush the pards and effect a rescue of Rankin. The scout, now that Rankin was a prisoner, wanted to get out of that part of the country without loss of time.

Pawnee Bill found his gold in the cabin, and the baron, greatly to his delight, recovered his pipe, his knife, his silver, and his six-shooters.

For some reason or other, Rankin, in following Buffalo Bill to the cabin, had left the belt and revolvers with the claybank cayuse and taken with him only his knife.

Little Cayuse picked up all the fragments of the Ke-week totem and piled them on a handkerchief; then, knotting the handkerchief at the corners, he pushed the small bundle into his medicine bag.

"What're ye goin' ter do with thet mess o' hocus-pocus stuff, son?" queried Nomad.

"Give um to Kiowa," answered Cayuse.

The ride to the big bend of the Washita was quickly

made, and without any untoward incident. The Texans did not show themselves, and neither did Scarred Face and the three Cheyennes.

Little Hatchet was still keeping house in Scarred Face's hut when the scout and his party arrived in the bend. He came out to greet the Piute and the white men, and had to be held back from taking swift vengeance on the manacled Rankin.

"Him white thief who steal um cayuse and totem!" growled the Kiowa.

"We've discovered that, Kiowa," said the scout. "We bring back your claybank cayuse."

"You ketch um totem?" demanded Little Hatchet breathlessly.

"Totem busted," announced Little Cayuse. "Me bring um pieces."

The Kiowa took the knotted handkerchief from Little Cayuse, untied the corners and laid the fragments on the ground at his feet. The sight demoralized Little Hatchet. He beat his clenched fists against his forehead in the fierce agony of his disappointment.

"The Ke-week totem was bad medicine, Little Hatchet," said the scout.

"Him bad medicine now," was the reply; "good medicine before him broke."

"The totem couldn't have helped the Kiowas any," went on the scout.

"Him no help Kiowas now," was the gruesome response.

"Do the Kiowas think that a thing like the totem could drive the whites out of the country?"

"Kiowas no think um now."

"The Kiowas will be better off if they make the most of what they have."

"Kiowas no got much left," was the disconsolate rejoinder.

"They've got all they're entitled to, Little Hatchet," put in Pawnee Bill. "Get on your claybank cayuse and go home. Take the broken totem with you. It's a heap safer for everybody, broken as it is, and it will do the Kiowas just as much good."

When the scout and his pards rode away from Scarred Face's hut, Little Hatchet was still mourning over the broken totem.

Early the next morning Tex Rankin was back in Fort Reno. Bennett and Yarnall were there to greet him, and to extend felicitations to the scout and his pards on account of their splendid success in recapturing the escaped prisoner.

The pards, while at the fort, said little about their experiences with the Ke-week totem, but that night, in the Kingfisher hotel, they discussed the matter at some length.

"Did you ever see a man hypnotized, Robinson?" asked the scout.

"Once or twice," answered the marshal.

"Did you ever see the hypnotizing done by means of an object held in front of the subject's eyes?"

"Can't say that I ever did."

"I've seen the thing done that way. It's a simple proposition and the subject really hypnotizes himself."

"What's all that got to do with the Ke-week totem, necarnis?" queried Pawnee Bill.

"Why," was the scout's answer, "I think that a state of hypnosis was induced by means of the eyes of the image. They were peculiar eyes. Taken in conjunction with the buffalo head on a human body, the eyes were sure to draw the attention of any one who looked at the totem."

"All that, Buffalo Bill, sounds reasonable," said Robinson, "and may have had something to do with the hypnotic effects of the Ke-week idol. I'm not up enough in that sort of knowledge to be able to pass an intelligent opinion. In using the image, Rankin always kept the face of it away from him."

"I'm not familiar enough with hypnotism to get complete satisfaction out of the explanation I have advanced," admitted the scout, "and, speaking for myself, there are a good many things connected with the Ke-week totem that will always be a mystery. Eh, Pawnee?"

"Yes, Pard Bill," returned the prince of the bowie. "What we don't know about some things in this world fills a larger book than what we do. The totem, according to the Pawnees, was thrown down from heaven during a thunderstorm. That's where the Pawnees got it wrong. It was never thrown down from heaven, but was passed up from that other place, below. That's my theory."

The scout laughed, but the baron hunched himself together and hugged himself with his arms.

"Don'd shpeak like dot," he begged. "Sooch oxberiences as ve hat mit der totem iss to be forgodden so keveck as bossiple. Dey vas a varning."

"What sort of a warning, baron?" queried Pawnee Bill.

"A varning nod to haf somet'ing to do mit any more totem, py shinks! I vill run der odder vay nexdt time I see sooch a t'ing. I don'd like totems."

"Ye're all wrong, Buffler, in explainin' how thet totem got in its work."

This from old Nomad, with an awed look around him into space.

"What's wrong with my explanation, Nick?" asked the scout.

"Ye left out ther things thet ralely put ther crimps inter a feller's brain when he looked at ther Ke-week thing."

"What things?"

"Whiskizos."

Pawnee Bill went off into a roar of mirth. The scout and the marshal joined in.

"Don't do thet!" begged the old trapper, with so much earnestness that the laughter died away suddenly.

"Why can't we laugh at your foolishness if we want to?" asked the bowie man.

"Bekase ye'll git Jonahed. Whiskizos is quare, thet'erway. They becomes all worked up when a feller questions 'em, but ef a feller b'leaves in 'em they kinder lets him alone. Anyways, this hyar ain't ther fust time Buffler Bill an' pards hev gone up ag'inst totems."

"When was the other time, Nick?" asked Pawnee Bill.

"Down in Phoenix, Arizony, in a chink layout thar. A big idol done ther bizness, and et was with its eyes, too. Remember thet, Buffler?"

The scout nodded, a smile twitching at the corners of his lips.

"Likewise," went on the trapper earnestly, "Cayuse remembers et. Then, ag'in thar was thet time we mixed up with the b'ar totem o' the Yaquis. Injuns is some quare erbout totems."

"While there are some matters connected with the totem which we can't understand, friends," spoke up Robinson, "we all know, as well as we can know anything, that Tex Rankin, Red Jennings, Baxter, and Lenaway will now get their just deserts at the hands of the law."

"They will thet!" declared old Nomad, with enthusiasm.

"And Buffalo Bill and his pards are the ones to be congratulated on the outcome, which is certainly highly beneficial to the new lands recently turned over to the white settlers."

"Yah, so," agreed the baron. "Ve haf hat some exciting exberiences since ve come oop from der Texas Banhantle, I bed you."

"And not the least of them," said Pawnee Bill, "is our brief acquaintance with Ke-week, buffalo god of the Pawnees."

THE END.

We're just so excited over the story you'll get next week that we'd like to tell you all about it now, but that wouldn't do at all. Surely no dangerous, desperate gang of outlaws ever put up a more ingenious game to get away with a big wad of money. And you will wonder, as we do, that the two great scouts had even half a chance to get in some of their marvelous team work. We'll give you just one tip: the pards would have got a rough deal if it hadn't been for our old friend, Baron Schnitzenhauser. The baron got in with both feet, and did and said more funny things than you ever saw or heard at a theatre. Watch out for it. And begin it early in the evening, or you'll have to sit up all night, as we did. The number is 492.



NEW YORK, October 8, 1910.

TERMS TO BUFFALO BILL STORIES MAIL SUBSCRIBERS.

(Postage Free.)

Single Copies or Back Numbers, 5c. Each.

3 months	65c.	One year	\$2.50
4 months	85c.	2 copies one year	4.00
6 months	\$1.25	1 copy two years	4.00

How to Send Money—By post-office or express money order, registered letter, bank check or draft, at our risk. At your own risk if sent by currency, coin, or postage stamps in ordinary letter.

Receipts—Receipt of your remittance is acknowledged by proper change of number on your label. If not correct you have not been properly credited, and should let us know at once.

ORMOND G. SMITH, }
GEORGE C. SMITH, } Proprietors.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,
79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

THE YOUNG CAPTIVE CHIEF.

The *Black Swan*, Captain Shaw, master, with my brother, Jack Hallett, as supercargo, was bound out to the coast of Africa, to bring home freight of palm oil, gold dust, and other produce of the country. We had scarcely taken our departure from Boston before Captain Shaw fell ill, and Mr. Barr, the first mate, took charge of the vessel. He might have been a very good seaman, but he had not been out to that part of the coast before. I had accompanied my brother to learn the way of trading, hoping soon to get a similar situation to his.

We had sighted Cape Bojador one evening, and, the wind being fair, the mate said he should make a straight course for the Cape de Verde.

"You forget the way the currents run about here," said Jack. "They have a strong set inshore."

"If you are commissioned by the owners to take charge of this vessel, I will give her up to you," said the mate, who did not like his authority interfered with; "if not, wait till your advice is asked."

Jack and I were walking the deck at night.

"We are keeping much too close to the shore," he observed. "If the wind were to shift to the westward we should be in a pretty pickle."

The wind did shift to the westward before another hour had passed, and blew stronger and stronger. Just as eight bells had struck in the first watch a loud grating sound was heard.

"Down with the helm!" shouted the mate.

It was too late; the vessel would not come about, but drove on till she stuck hard and fast, with her broadside to the sea. The captain—ill as he was—came on deck, and ordered us to lower a boat.

"Hallett," he said, "do you take your brother and three hands and pull ashore. The rest of us must remain and try to get the vessel afloat."

We did as he told us, carrying along rope, so as to form a communication with the shore, that, should the worst come, those who remained on board might have a chance of gaining it.

We had got within fifty fathoms when a roller came hissing up, capsized the boat, and sent us all struggling into the water. I struck out, calling to Jack, and the next instant found my feet touching the sand.

I scrambled out, but on looking round, what was my horror not to discover my brother. Just then I saw a head and arms rising amid the surf.

I darted forward and dragged the person up. It was Jack.

He came quickly to himself.

Together we rescued the three seamen, but the boat was knocked to pieces, and the end of the rope lost. We could neither return nor help those on board to reach the shore.

The wind was increasing, the clouds covered the sky, and we lost sight of our vessel.

Finding that we could do nothing on the beach, we sought for shelter under the lee of a sand hill, where, exhausted by our exertions, we fell asleep.

When we awoke the next morning and looked out not a vestige of the vessel could we see, but the beach was strewn with wreck, and here and there lay the dead bodies of our shipmates. We were hungry and thirsty, but no water could we discover.

"There may be streams, notwithstanding," said Jack. "Many lost themselves in the sand; we must push inland in search of one; and the rocks will supply us with food."

We had provided ourselves with broken spars to support our steps, and serve as weapons of defense.

Before starting we got enough shell fish from the rocks to make a hearty meal, and took some in our pockets, but it was water we wanted. All that day we pushed on eastward, and the next and the next. Our shell fish having turned bad, we were starving. At last, getting to the top of a sand hill to look out, Jack fancied he saw some green trees in the distance.

"There may be an oasis out there with water," he said. "We must try to gain it."

In spite of the hot sun beating down on our heads, we went on. Still the oasis, if such it was, appeared as far off as ever. Jack cheered us on.

One of the seamen declared he could go no farther, and sank down, begging us to bring him water if we should find it. In vain we tried to persuade him to come along, and at last had to leave him to his fate!

Poor Ned! liquor had been his bane.

He had got hold of spirits the night before we drove ashore.

We hurried on, eager to obtain water, not only for ourselves, but that we might rescue our shipmate from death. We were almost sinking, when our eyes were cheered by a grove of trees, though still far off. Jack acknowledged that they could not have been visible from where he had supposed he had seen them.

"They are date trees," he exclaimed. "They will afford us food, and water we may hope to find under them."

As we drew near, our eyes were gladdened by the sight of a small pool, formed by a spring bubbling out of the earth.

Falling on our knees, we eagerly baled the water into our mouths with our hands. Thus revived, the two seamen were able to climb the trees and obtain as many bunches of dates as we wanted.

We now thought of our shipmate; but when the sun went down, the sky became overcast, and to find him in the dark seemed impossible.

"We can't let him die," said Jack. "I am ready to run the risk."

"And I will go with you," I said.

This remark shamed our two companions, Ben Holding and Tom Hill, who had thrown themselves on the ground to sleep, and they agreed to accompany us.

Jack thought he knew the direction to take, and in the cool of night traveling was easier than in the daytime.

We thought not of lions, or leopards, or other beasts of prey.

Though ready to sink with fatigue, we went on until we fancied that we had reached the spot where we had left poor Ned. We shouted his name, but no answer came. We searched about, keeping within hail of each other.

At length Ben Holding cried out:

"Here he is!"

We hurried up, but poor Ned was dead. We were too much fatigued to return to the oasis, so, throwing ourselves down under the shelter of a sand heap, we fell asleep.

The sun had already risen high when I awoke. On going to the top of a sand hill to look out for the oasis, I saw between it and us a number of objects. I called to Jack, who joined me.

"There are two parties on camels and horses, it seems to me," he said. "One flying from the other."

Descending the sand hill, we concealed ourselves behind it, lest we should be discovered; but, unable to restrain my curiosity, I crept on one side, whence I could see what was going forward.

The fugitives had turned around to meet their pursuers. A fierce fight was going forward, in which the camels on both sides seemed to be taking a part by kicking and leaping at each other, and I could hear their peculiar cries amid the clash of the weapons and the shouts of the combatants.

Presently I saw a person, who had apparently been thrown from his camel, come rushing at headlong speed toward the sand hill.

I drew back, and in another minute he came around to where we lay.

He was a mere boy, dressed in loose trousers, a silk jacket, a shawl around his waist, and a turban on his head.

His alarm at seeing us was so great that he was running on to avoid us, when Jack, who spoke Arabic, called to him gently, telling him that we were friends. On this, he came and crouched down close to us, trembling in every limb.

"From whom were you flying?" asked Jack.

"From the Ouadelins, who carried me off from my father's camp," said the young Arab.

"But were your friends not pursuing them?" asked Jack.

"No. Those who attacked my captors are equally enemies to my people; and had they taken me, I should have fared worse than before," he answered.

From the sounds which reached our ears we knew that the fight was still raging, but moving farther and farther from where we lay.

The young Arab, however, could not refrain from trying to see what was going on, and had Jack not pulled him back, would very likely have been discovered.

At length the sounds ceased, and, crawling to the brow of the hillock, so as just to look over it, I saw the two parties still apparently carrying on a straggling fight in the far distance.

We were by this time hungry and very thirsty.

"Come; let's be going back to the date grove," cried Ben, "for my throat is like a dust bin."

"Should the Arabs come back they'll carry us off, if we do," said Jack. "Better bear our hunger and thirst till the coast is clear."

It was all we could do, however, to restrain the men.

Selim, the young Arab, said that Jack's advice was good, and advised us to remain concealed for the present. At last Ben and Tom declared that they could stand it no longer, and, in spite of Jack's warning, set off, running for the date grove.

We watched them as far as we could see their figures. At length they appeared to have entered it.

They had been gone for some time, when Selim, who had been looking out at the top of a hill, said that his enemies were making for the date grove.

My fear was, that Ben and Tom would be on their way to rejoin us, and, being seen by the Arabs, would lead them to our hiding place.

The Arabs came nearer and nearer.

I fancied that I saw our two shipmates just coming out of the grove, but they, on perceiving the Arabs, darted back again, trying to conceal themselves.

Their capture was certain.

The Arabs reached the date grove, and, to our dismay, appeared to be preparing to pass the night there.

Our sufferings now became intense. We feared, also, that

the sailors would be compelled to betray us. The evening was approaching, and I felt that I could scarcely hope to live through the night if we could not obtain food.

Suddenly Selim, observing our countenances, which showed what we were feeling, put his hand in his pocket, and, producing a quantity of dried dates, offered them to us. Though our thirst was great, we were able to eat them, and felt much revived.

"They will go by daylight to-morrow," said Selim, pointing to the grove, "and then we may obtain water."

When night came on we lay down to rest. There was little risk now of being discovered by our enemies, but a lion or some other wild beast might scent us out. Both Jack and I, however, were too tired to keep awake; but Selim seemed to divine our thoughts, and offered to sit up and watch while we slept.

He was faithful to his trust. When the dawn broke, and I awoke, I saw him still sitting with his eyes fixed on us.

"The Ouadelins are on the move," he said, "but we must lie close, or they will discover us."

I, however, went to the top of the hillock, on which a few bushes growing completely concealed me. Thence I could see the date grove. In a short time the Arabs appeared, mounted on their camels, moving northward.

We waited till they had disappeared in the distance, then we all three hurried toward the grove. On reaching it, we lost not a moment in quenching our thirst, and as soon as we had recovered our voices we shouted for Ben and Tom.

No answer was returned.

We hunted about in all directions, and at last came to the conclusion that the Arabs had carried them off. They had also taken away a large portion of the dates, but a few remained, which Selim, climbing a tree, got for us. We remained in the grove all day, eating dates and drinking water.

"I say, Fred, we can't live here forever," said Jack, "for we shall soon have eaten up all the provisions the country supplies. I must consult with Selim as to what course to pursue."

Selim advised that we should move northward. It was a long journey to the tents of his people, he said, but he thought that he could conduct us in safety.

Accordingly, after another night's rest, having loaded ourselves with dates, and fortunately discovered a leathern bottle, which we filled with water, we set out. It had evidently been left behind by the Arabs. Selim advised us to be very careful of the water, as it might be many days before we could reach another spring.

With our sticks in our hands, we trudged over the plain. Though the heat was great, the country as we advanced was less arid and sandy than farther south.

After traveling for five days, we unexpectedly came upon another date grove, shading a pool. Here we replenished our provisions and water, and, after a whole day's rest, again set forward.

I can give but a meager description of our journey. Day after day we trudged on, sometimes almost starved, and ready to die of thirst. Occasionally we saw what we supposed to be caravans moving in the distance. Selim advised us not to attempt to join them, as he feared the Arabs might carry us off to sell as slaves.

At length one day, as we were traversing a wide, open plain without either hillocks or bushes, we saw some moving objects in the distance. They neared us rapidly, and we soon made them out to be a body of men on camels' backs.

"The camels are of the Bu Saif breed," cried Selim. "We cannot escape them."

"Then let us stand still and not make the attempt," said Jack.

We stood, as Jack advised, close together; he in front, Selim and I on either side of him. As the camels drew nearer, we saw that they were ridden by dark-skinned fellows, brandishing swords and spears.

Uttering loud shouts, they made as if they would cut

us down, when suddenly Selim darted forward, and, raising his hands, exclaimed:

"I'm Selim Ben Hamid, the son of the chief of the Malashlas. Spare these white men; they are my friends."

The Arabs, instead of cutting us to pieces, instantly reined in their camels. One of their leaders took up Selim behind him, and two others, Jack and me, in their fashion, treating us with great respect, then turning their camels' heads, again set off at full speed northward.

"I say, Fred, how do you like it?" asked Jack.

"Not at all; but it's better than being killed," I answered, for in a few minutes from the rough motion of the camel the skin was nearly worn off my legs.

The remainder of the day we traveled on till we reached another oasis, where our friends encamped, and very glad Jack and I were to get some rest.

Selim told us that we had many more days' journey before we could reach the camp of his people. When Jack said that he didn't think we could bear the bumping, he replied that we should soon get accustomed to it. The night's rest and some black biscuit in addition to the dates restored our strength, and we proceeded on our journey.

I thought sometimes that I should have to give in, for the enduring camels moved twelve hours together without stopping. What they and their masters were made of I could not conceive, for they went on without food, and we, their riders, ate only a handful of dates.

As Selim had remarked, we did get accustomed to it, however, though by the time we reached his father's tents we were little more than skin and bone.

As the old chief saw us approaching he came out, and, after embracing his son, who told him of the services we had rendered, expressed his gratitude to us in a long harangue, not a word of which I understood. As he was on friendly terms with the tribes to the north, he promised to forward us to the coast.

After spending a week at his tents, we recommenced our journey, accompanied for several days by Selim, from whom we parted with much regret. He promised that he would use every endeavor to discover Ben and Tom, and obtain their release.

Two years afterward, when I went out as supercargo of the *Rattlesnake*, to my satisfaction I found Ben on board her, and he told me that Tom had also escaped, both of them having undergone incredible hardships and met with the most wonderful adventures, till they were discovered by the young chief, Selim, who effected their release from captivity.

THEY SUFFERED TERRIBLY.

At the great naval battle off the Yalu River last year the Chinese ironclad battleship *Chen Yuen* was commanded by an American named McGriffen. Captain McGriffen, who has but lately recovered in part from injuries received in this already historic battle, gives many strikingly interesting details illustrative of the terrible nature of a modern naval engagement between ironclads.

You can form little conception of the awful character of battle inside armor-plated steam vessels, he said in a recent conversation, where space and air are necessarily much restricted and confined. The din made by the impact of heavy projectiles against the thick metal sides is frightful beyond description, and seems to shake one's very life. I wore cotton in both ears, but am still somewhat deaf.

As the Japanese warships were faster than the *Chen Yuen*, we made all steam possible to secure speed for our evolutions. From being so closely shut, the engine room and fire room became intolerably hot, yet the engineers and stokers stuck manfully to their posts. The skin of their hands and arms was actually roasted, and nearly every man became blind from the searing of the outer membrane of the eye.

One of the enemy's rapid-fire-gun shells struck an open

gun shield early in the fight and glanced down through the port; seven gunners were killed and fifteen disabled by that one projectile.

Very soon I noticed that the Maxim gun up in the foretop on our military mast was silent, and saw a hole in the armor plating around it. After the battle the officer and six men stationed there were found dead, shockingly mangled, all destroyed by a single shell from a rapid-firing gun.

Late in the action, after my hair had been burned off and my eyes so impaired by injected blood that I could see out of but one of them, and then only by lifting the lid with my fingers, it became necessary for me to observe for myself the position of the enemy's ships.

As I groped my way round the protected deck, with one hand on the inside of the armor plating, a hundred-pound shell struck and came through it about a foot and a half from where my hand rested.

In an instant my hand was so burned that much of the skin stuck to the metal plate—from the sudden heat engendered by the blow. I was not aware that any fragment of the shell or armor struck me, but my clothing was simply rent to tatters by the detonation or concussion, as it seemed.

DARING.

Paul, the eccentric Czar of Russia, assassinated in 1801, was very particular as to his dress, and considered trifling matters as of supreme importance. This peculiarity was once taken advantage of by an officer of his guards, a major, to win a bet. The wildest joker in the army, as he was, wagered several hundred roubles that he would "tweak" the tail of the emperor's wig on parade.

The very next day the emperor happened to be present at early parade, and, as destiny ruled it, took a position for a moment immediately in front of the daring major. Breathless with excitement and terror, the officer's companions beheld that rash officer's right hand steal slowly from his side, rise to the level of the Czar's neck, and give the wig's hanging tail a most decided pull.

In an instant the emperor's face, pale with fury, was turned upon the major's countenance, which, however, only reflected an expression of childlike innocence, mingled with the most deferential astonishment.

"Who dared to do that?" asked the enraged Czar, his eyes giving flashing evidence that his most dangerous mood was upon him.

"I did, your majesty," said the major, who managed to preserve outwardly an unruffled calm, together with an expression of innocent surprise. "It was crooked, your majesty," he added, in a confidential undertone. "I straightened it for fear the younger officers should see."

Paul's countenance cleared at once. He stared fixedly, however, at the major's innocent-looking face for some seconds. The officer admitted afterward that this was the trying moment; but he had said to himself: "If I waver, I'm lost!"

Then the Czar spoke, and spoke so that all might hear.

"I thank you, colonel," he said.

If ever a step in rank was gained by the purest effrontery, it was so acquired on this occasion, for the officer left the field, not only promoted to a coveted position in the guards, but richer by many hundred roubles as the result of his wager.

AN IGNORAMUS.

Mr. Blinkers—"I understand, sir, that your son and my daughter are engaged, and I feel that on account of my daughter's youth their contemplated marriage should be postponed."

Mr. Levelhead—"What? My son talking about marrying? Why, he's a mere infant, a perfect ignoramus. He doesn't know enough to last him over Sunday. Why, sir, the fellow hasn't been out of college over a year."

LATEST ISSUES

TIP TOP WEEKLY

The most popular publication for boys. The adventures of Frank and Dick Merriwell can be had only in this weekly. High art colored covers. Thirty-two pages. Price, 5 cents.

- 744—Dick Merriwell's Silence; or, The Shadow of the Past.
- 745—Dick Merriwell's Dog; or, Faithful to the Last.
- 746—Dick Merriwell's Subterfuge; or, The Tussle with the Top-notchers.
- 747—Dick Merriwell's Enigma; or, The Mystery of Mermaid Island.
- 748—Dick Merriwell Defeated; or, The Champion of the Clover Club.
- 749—Dick Merriwell's "Wing"; or, The Man Who Couldn't Be Stopped.

- 750—Dick Merriwell's Sky Chase; or, The Diamond Mystery of Denver.
- 751—Dick Merriwell's Pick-ups; or, A Game with the Outlaws.
- 752—Dick Merriwell on the Rocking R; or, The Finish of the Feud.
- 753—Dick Merriwell's Penetration; or, The Man from Nowhere.
- 754—Dick Merriwell's Intuition; or, The Worst Fellow in College.
- 755—Dick Merriwell's Vantage; or, The Hindoo Mystery.
- 756—Dick Merriwell's Advice; or, The Man Who Woke Up.

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

The best detective stories on earth. Nick Carter's exploits are read the world over. High art colored covers. Thirty-two big pages. Price, 5 cents.

- 706—A Million-dollar Ransom; or, Nick Carter's Bathhouse Tragedy.
- 707—Rogues of the Air; or, Nick Carter's Helicopter Clue.
- 708—The Tightening Coil; or, Nick Carter Outpointing Master Rogues.
- 709—The Bolt from the Blue; or, Nick Carter and the Dream Stone.
- 710—The Stockbridge Affair; or, Nick Carter's Quick Detective Work.
- 711—A Secret from the Past; or, Nick Carter's Treasure-vault Case.

- 712—Playing the Last Hand; or, Nick Carter After a Bad Man.
- 713—A Slick Article; or, The Cleverest Rogue in New York.
- 714—The Taxicab Riddle; or, Nick Carter's Second Assistant.
- 715—The Knife Thrower; or, Nick Carter's Tragic Case.
- 716—The Ghost of Bare-faced Jimmy; or, Nick Carter Meets with Defiance.
- 717—The Master Rogue's Alibi; or, Nick Carter Traces a Stolen Name.
- 718—The Diplomatic Spy; or, Nick Carter and "The Leopard."
- 719—The Dead Letter; or, Nick Carter's Postal Clue.

DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

The heroes of the stories published in this weekly are dear to the hearts of 60,000 boys. Diamond Dick is a splendid Western character. High art colored covers. Thirty-two big pages. Price, 5 cents.

- 718—Diamond Dick's Mill Mystery; or, Handsome Harry's Bugaboo.
- 719—Diamond Dick's Marvelous Capture; or, The Hounding of Gil Curry.
- 720—Diamond Dick's Lightning Feat; or, Handsome Harry and the Golden Treasure.
- 721—Diamond Dick's Wonder Trail; or, The Fall of Red Radigan.
- 722—Diamond Dick's Dangerous Duty; or, The Million-dollar Mystery.
- 723—Diamond Dick's Fair Play; or, The Smuggler's Defeat.

- 724—Diamond Dick's Long Chance; or, A Robbery at Home.
- 725—Diamond Dick's Cleverness; or, The Mystery of a Piece of Brass.
- 726—Diamond Dick's Dead Line; or, A Plot for Wealth.
- 727—Diamond Dick to the Rescue; or, The Mysterious Missive of Blood.
- 728—Diamond Dick Catches On; or, A New Phase of an Old Game.
- 729—Diamond Dick's Sudden Strike; or, The Capture of Blazing Bill.
- 730—Diamond Dick's Daring Dash; or, The Stranding of Jock.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address on receipt of price, 5 cents per copy, in money or postage stamps, by

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York

IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS of our Weeklies and cannot procure them from your newsdealer, they can be obtained from this office direct. Fill out the following Order Blank and send it to us with the price of the Weeklies you want and we will send them to you by return mail. **POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.**

STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Dear Sirs: Enclosed please find.....cents for which send me:7

TIP TOP WEEKLY, Nos.....
NICK CARTER WEEKLY, ".....
DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY, ".....

BUFFALO BILL STORIES, Nos.....
BRAVE AND BOLD WEEKLY, ".....

Name.....Street.....City.....State.....

BUFFALO BILL STORIES

ISSUED EVERY TUESDAY

BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS

There is no need of our telling American readers how interesting the stories of the adventures of Buffalo Bill, as scout and plainsman, really are. These stories have been read exclusively in this weekly for many years, and are voted to be masterpieces dealing with Western adventure.

Buffalo Bill is more popular to-day than he ever was, and, consequently, everybody ought to know all there is to know about him. In no manner can you become so thoroughly acquainted with the actual habits and life of this great man, as by reading the BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

We give herewith a list of all of the back numbers in print. You can have your news-dealer order them or they will be sent direct by the publishers to any address upon receipt of the price in money or postage-stamps.

245—Buffalo Bill's Lost Quarry.....	5	363—Buffalo Bill's Quest.....	5	430—Buffalo Bill and the Cheyenne Raiders	5
250—Buffalo Bill on a Long Hunt.....	5	364—Buffalo Bill's Waif of the Plains.....	5	431—Buffalo Bill's Whirlwind Finish.....	5
252—Buffalo Bill and the Redskin Wizard	5	366—Buffalo Bill Among the Mormons.....	5	432—Buffalo Bill's Santa Fe Secret.....	5
253—Buffalo Bill's Bold Challenge.....	5	367—Buffalo Bill's Assistance.....	5	433—Buffalo Bill and the Taos Terror.....	5
254—Buffalo Bill's Shawnee Stampede.....	5	368—Buffalo Bill's Rattlesnake Trail.....	5	434—Buffalo Bill's Bracelet of Gold.....	5
256—Buffalo Bill on a Desert Trail.....	5	369—Buffalo Bill and the Slave-Dealers.....	5	435—Buffalo Bill and the Border Baron.....	5
258—Buffalo Bill in Tight Quarters.....	5	370—Buffalo Bill's Strong Arm.....	5	436—Buffalo Bill at Salt River Ranch.....	5
264—Buffalo Bill and the Bandits in Black	5	371—Buffalo Bill's Girl Pard.....	5	437—Buffalo Bill's Panhandle Man-hunt.....	5
267—Buffalo Bill in the Canyon of Death.	5	372—Buffalo Bill's Iron Bracelets.....	5	438—Buffalo Bill at Blossom Range.....	5
269—Buffalo Bill and the Robber Ranch	5	373—Buffalo Bill's Ranch Riders.....	5	439—Buffalo Bill and Juniper Joe.....	5
King.....	5	374—Buffalo Bill's Jade Amulet.....	5	440—Buffalo Bill's Final Scoop.....	5
272—Buffalo Bill's Dusky Trailers.....	5	375—Buffalo Bill's Magic Lariat.....	5	441—Buffalo Bill at Clearwater.....	5
273—Buffalo Bill's Diamond Mine.....	5	377—Buffalo Bill's Bridge of Fire.....	5	442—Buffalo Bill's Winning Hand.....	5
274—Buffalo Bill and the Pawnee Serpent	5	378—Buffalo Bill's Bowie.....	5	443—Buffalo Bill's Cinch Claim.....	5
275—Buffalo Bill's Scarlet Hand.....	5	379—Buffalo Bill's Pay-streak.....	5	444—Buffalo Bill's Comrades.....	5
278—Buffalo Bill's Daring Plunge.....	5	380—Buffalo Bill's Mine.....	5	445—Buffalo Bill in the Bad Lands.....	5
280—Buffalo Bill's Ghost Raid.....	5	381—Buffalo Bill's Clean-up.....	5	446—Buffalo Bill and the Boy Bugler.....	5
283—Buffalo Bill Up a Stump.....	5	382—Buffalo Bill's Ruse.....	5	447—Buffalo Bill and the Heathen Chinese.	5
285—Buffalo Bill's Master-stroke.....	5	383—Buffalo Bill Overboard.....	5	448—Buffalo Bill and the Chink War.....	5
287—Buffalo Bill and the Brazos Terror.....	5	384—Buffalo Bill's Ring.....	5	449—Buffalo Bill's Chinese Chase.....	5
288—Buffalo Bill's Dance of Death.....	5	385—Buffalo Bill's Big Contract.....	5	450—Buffalo Bill's Secret Message.....	5
292—Buffalo Bill's Medicine-lodge.....	5	386—Buffalo Bill and Calamity Jane.....	5	451—Buffalo Bill and the Horde of Her-	5
293—Buffalo Bill in Peril.....	5	387—Buffalo Bill's Kid Pard.....	5	mosa.....	5
298—Buffalo Bill's Black Eagles.....	5	388—Buffalo Bill's Desperate Plight.....	5	452—Buffalo Bill's Lonesome Trail.....	5
299—Buffalo Bill's Desperate Dozen.....	5	389—Buffalo Bill's Fearless Stand.....	5	453—Buffalo Bill's Quarry.....	5
305—Buffalo Bill and the Barge Bandits.	5	390—Buffalo Bill and the Yelping Crew...	5	454—Buffalo Bill in Deadwood.....	5
306—Buffalo Bill, the Desert Hotspur.....	5	391—Buffalo Bill's Guiding Hand.....	5	455—Buffalo Bill's First Aid.....	5
308—Buffalo Bill's Whirlwind Chase.....	5	392—Buffalo Bill's Queer Quest.....	5	456—Buffalo Bill and Old Moonlight.....	5
309—Buffalo Bill's Red Retribution.....	5	393—Buffalo Bill's Prize "Getaway".....	5	457—Buffalo Bill Repaid.....	5
310—Buffalo Bill Haunted.....	5	394—Buffalo Bill's Hurricane Hustle.....	5	458—Buffalo Bill's Throwback.....	5
312—Buffalo Bill's Death Jump.....	5	395—Buffalo Bill's Star Play.....	5	459—Buffalo Bill's "Sight Unseen".....	5
314—Buffalo Bill in the Jaws of Death.....	5	396—Buffalo Bill's Bluff.....	5	460—Buffalo Bill's New Pard.....	5
315—Buffalo Bill's Aztec Runners.....	5	397—Buffalo Bill's Trackers.....	5	461—Buffalo Bill's "Winged Victory".....	5
316—Buffalo Bill's Dance with Death.....	5	398—Buffalo Bill's Dutch Pard.....	5	462—Buffalo Bill's Pieces-of-Eight.....	5
319—Buffalo Bill's Mazepa Ride.....	5	399—Buffalo Bill and the Bravo.....	5	463—Buffalo Bill and the Eight Vaqueros	5
321—Buffalo Bill's Gypsy Band.....	5	400—Buffalo Bill and the Quaker.....	5	464—Buffalo Bill's Unlucky Siesta.....	5
324—Buffalo Bill's Gold Hunters.....	5	401—Buffalo Bill's Package of Death.....	5	465—Buffalo Bill's Apache Clue.....	5
325—Buffalo Bill in Old Mexico.....	5	402—Buffalo Bill's Treasure Cache.....	5	466—Buffalo Bill and the Apache Totem.....	5
326—Buffalo Bill's Message from the Dead	5	403—Buffalo Bill's Private War.....	5	467—Buffalo Bill's Golden Wonder.....	5
327—Buffalo Bill and the Wolf-master.....	5	404—Buffalo Bill and the Trouble Hunter	5	468—Buffalo Bill's Fiesta Night.....	5
328—Buffalo Bill's Flying Wonder.....	5	405—Buffalo Bill and the Rope Wizard.....	5	469—Buffalo Bill and the Hatchet Boys.....	5
329—Buffalo Bill's Hidden Gold.....	5	406—Buffalo Bill's Fiesta.....	5	470—Buffalo Bill and the Mining Shark.....	5
330—Buffalo Bill's Cowlaw Trail.....	5	407—Buffalo Bill Among the Cheyennes.....	5	471—Buffalo Bill and the Cattle Barons.....	5
331—Buffalo Bill and the Indian Queen.....	5	408—Buffalo Bill Besieged.....	5	472—Buffalo Bill's Long Odds.....	5
332—Buffalo Bill and the Mad Marauder.....	5	409—Buffalo Bill and the Red Hand.....	5	473—Buffalo Bill, the Peacemaker.....	5
333—Buffalo Bill's Ice Barricade.....	5	410—Buffalo Bill's Tree-trunk Drift.....	5	474—Buffalo Bill's Promise to Pay.....	5
334—Buffalo Bill and the Robber Elk.....	5	411—Buffalo Bill and the Specter.....	5	475—Buffalo Bill's Diamond Hitch.....	5
335—Buffalo Bill's Ghost Dance.....	5	412—Buffalo Bill and the Red Feathers.....	5	476—Buffalo Bill and the Wheel of Fate.....	5
336—Buffalo Bill's Peace-pipe.....	5	413—Buffalo Bill's King Stroke.....	5	477—Buffalo Bill and the Pool of Mystery	5
337—Buffalo Bill's Red Nemesis.....	5	414—Buffalo Bill, the Desert Cyclone.....	5	478—Buffalo Bill and the Deserter.....	5
338—Buffalo Bill's Enchanted Mesa.....	5	415—Buffalo Bill's Cumbres Scouts.....	5	479—Buffalo Bill's Island in the Air.....	5
339—Buffalo Bill in the Desert of Death.	5	416—Buffalo Bill and the Man-wolf.....	5	480—Buffalo Bill, Town Marshal.....	5
340—Buffalo Bill's Pay Streak.....	5	417—Buffalo Bill and His Winged Pard.....	5	481—Buffalo Bill's Ultimatum.....	5
341—Buffalo Bill on Detached Duty.....	5	418—Buffalo Bill at Babylon Bar.....	5	482—Buffalo Bill's Test.....	5
342—Buffalo Bill's Arm Mystery.....	5	419—Buffalo Bill's Long Arm.....	5	483—Buffalo Bill and the Ponca Raiders.....	5
343—Buffalo Bill's Surprise Party.....	5	421—Buffalo Bill's Steel Arm Pard.....	5	484—Buffalo Bill's Boldest Stroke.....	5
344—Buffalo Bill's Great Ride.....	5	422—Buffalo Bill's Aztec Guide.....	5	485—Buffalo Bill's Enigma.....	5
345—Buffalo Bill's Water Trail.....	5	423—Buffalo Bill and Little Firefly.....	5	486—Buffalo Bill's Blockade.....	5
346—Buffalo Bill's Ordeal of Fire.....	5	424—Buffalo Bill in the Aztec City.....	5	487—Buffalo Bill and the Gilded Clique.....	5
348—Buffalo Bill's Casket of Pearls.....	5	425—Buffalo Bill's Balloon Escape.....	5	488—Buffalo Bill and Perdita Reyes.....	5
349—Buffalo Bill's Sky Pilot.....	5	426—Buffalo Bill and the Guerrillas.....	5	489—Buffalo Bill and the Boomers.....	5
350—Buffalo Bill's "Totem".....	5	427—Buffalo Bill's Border War.....	5	490—Buffalo Bill Calls a Halt.....	5
351—Buffalo Bill's Flat-boat Drift.....	5	428—Buffalo Bill's Mexican Mix-up.....	5	491—Buffalo Bill and the Ke-week Totem.	5
352—Buffalo Bill on Deck.....	5	429—Buffalo Bill and the Gamecock.....	5		
353—Buffalo Bill and the Bronco Buster.....	5				
354—Buffalo Bill's Great Round-up.....	5				
355—Buffalo Bill's Pledge.....	5				
356—Buffalo Bill's Cowboy Pard.....	5				
357—Buffalo Bill and the Emigrants.....	5				
358—Buffalo Bill Among the Pueblos.....	5				
359—Buffalo Bill's Four-footed Pards.....	5				
360—Buffalo Bill's Protégé.....	5				
362—Buffalo Bill's Pick-up.....	5				

If you want any back numbers of our weeklies and cannot procure them from your newsdealer, they can be obtained direct from this office. Postage-stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, 79-89 SEVENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY